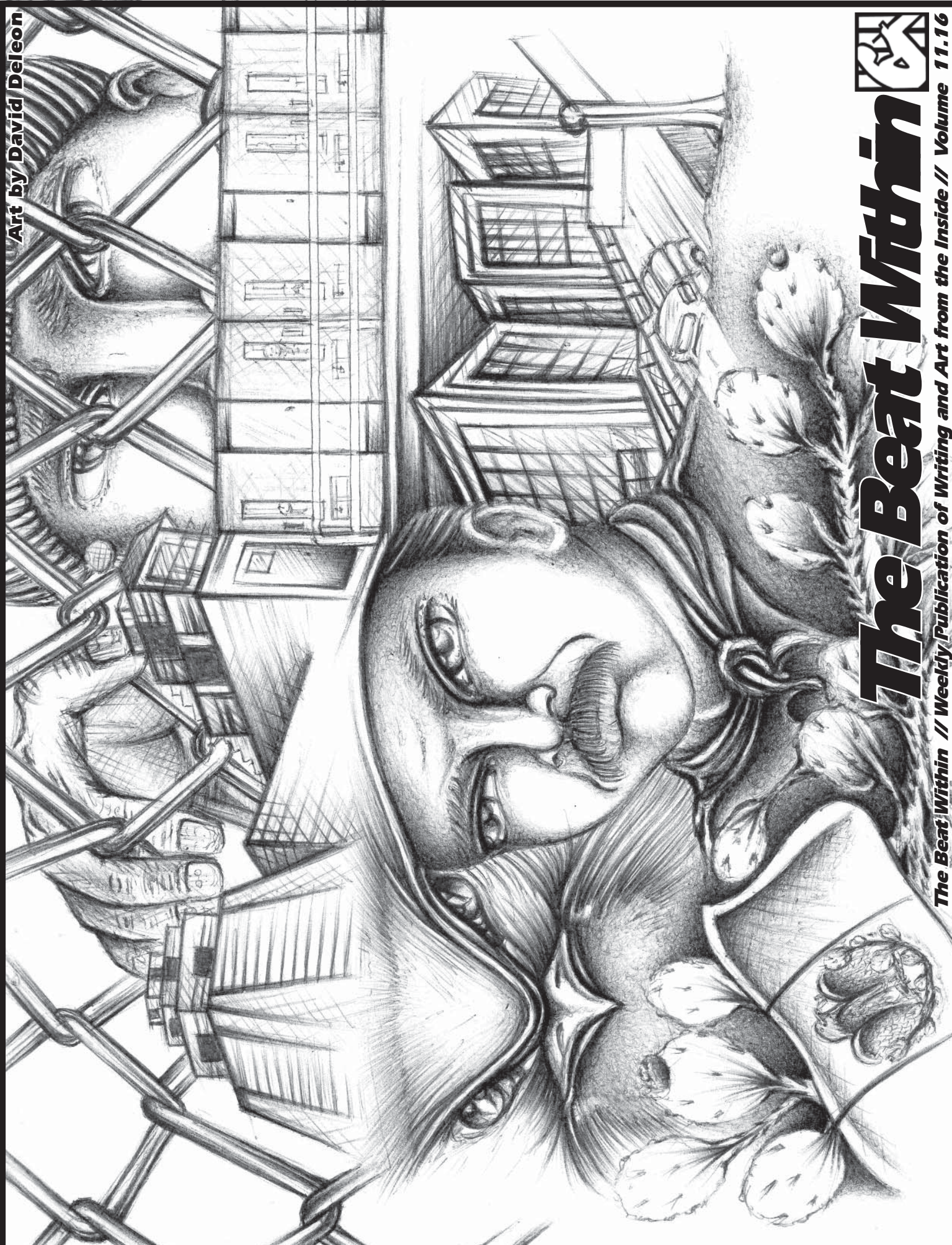




Art by David Deleon



The Beat Within

The Beat Within // Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside // Volume 11.16

Welcome to The Beat's issue 11.16 editorial note readers! It's so good to have your eyes on this ed note, given the hundreds who so easily bypass this very much looking blob of writing. Well, it's more than a blob, right? Well, if you have been paying attention to the editorial note in recent weeks we have had guest writers/ colleagues step up and share a little bit of this and that with us, and this week is no different, we bring to you a power trio of friends who have been hooking up along with this editor to go out and speak about our work.

Recently we have been in Alameda County Juvenile Hall aka 150, in the max unit three to unit C. A couple weeks ago we were in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall talking to a couple English classes, max unit B8, and to one young man in B9. This week we will be taking it to Monterey County to speak to a host of mental health/juvenile hall workers, and next week we return for a couple more units in Alameda County. Hopefully there is more in the near future!

The speaking engagements are such a powerful outlet for us all, especially the young men who were asked to write a little something, something for this editorial note so all of you readers could get a taste of what our friends did for us all.

First up, Will Roy, aka the Poetic Prisoner, who we first met when he was in the max unit in SF/YGC many years ago, during The Beat infancy. After Will, we bring you Perry Jones, who also was apart of the early magic of The Beat Within back in 1997 when he too was in the max unit fighting for his life as a fourteen year old. Lastly would have been Nick Jones who was San Mateo Hillcrest Juvenile Hall's first Prop.21 candidate who also was fighting for his life, yet during this struggle like Perry and Will was putting his thoughts down in The Beat Within each week. Unfortunately we cannot find Nick's entry, so hopefully next time we can feature his thoughts. Now allow us to pass the keyboard over to Will, Will!

For me, going into both Alameda County and Santa Clara County Juvenile Halls created an experience that unrivaled any other in my lifetime. Each time I step back into a locked facility as a guest and not a resident, I'm reminded of my greatest adversarial memory — incarceration, and this time was no different. However, when we began speaking to a very attentive and respectful audience, I felt as though I was fulfilling one of my purposes in life. For though, I became saddened by the fact that, for some, my dreadful memories are what were in store for them, I couldn't help but bask in the positive of the experience.

We left our own ex-con, parolee struggles at the door of a tunnel and became the sunshine for those who still remained. And because they don't get a regular dosage of raw connection with people who've recently been where they're going, it was evident that they appreciated us on a level incomparable to any other. We go to San Francisco's Juvenile Hall every week and though there are some great people there, you can tell we've been slightly taken for granted. It was nice to be looked at as people who offered hope — people who had real answers to their unanswered questions.

Not only that, but because I've been speaking on various occasions for a while now I've grown to be prepared for the same ol', same ol' — agenda, particular message, overshadowed by experts, more time given to advocates. This was none of that. This was raw, natural interaction between talents that have been forgotten as a way to find ourselves together in pursuit of one common goal — succeeding in the face of tremendous adversity.

It was also nice to share the platform with Dave, the man who made this all possible in the first place, and two other people I have the utmost respect for — Perry and Nick. It's amazing how we can bring many different things to the table between the three of us and still mesh together with the same passion. It's a relief to know that I'm not the only one out here struggling to push for those that can't push for themselves at the moment. And after this the floor will be opened up for them to share their thoughts on the experience.

But first let me thank all of the people we talked to because believe it or not, I went in there to teach and ended up learning. We appreciate the great questions you asked and the respect you showed us. Hopefully, we can make it happen again. People out here need to be aware of all the talent we possess, so please keep writing down those thoughts — even if you don't show them to anyone. You see how powerful this is. I can't paint a perfect picture of exactly what these workshops meant to me, but I can put one together — that's power. Let me pass the pen on to my real good friend, Perry.

First off I would like give thanks to David Inocencio, and to Amy Cheney (150 Librarian) and Laura Thornton (Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall Teacher) for making it possible for us to deliver a message that was well received and respected. The Staff members were very supportive and showed love, and that was cool because I was able to relax and re-adapt to a situation that I can't stand. Most important it's a must that I extend my love and up most respect to all the young men in Alameda County and Santa Clara County Juvenile Halls. Thanks for keeping it solid by giving us your undivided attention as well as open mind to what we call "real talk."

Going back into these juvenile halls was a very empowering experience for me. Standing before these young student's was a true blessing that was manifested through the deep connection that we made with the spirits of not only the detainees, but the counseling staff members as well.

I'll have to say that it all was an out-of-body experience that words can only partially define. I say this because I'm sitting here thinking back on how I use to tell myself that once I decoded the matrix I would dedicate myself and time to sharing my wisdom and spirit with those who slip and fall victim to a system that was set up against the favor of the less fortunate products of society. When I say "decode the matrix" I mean to say, to actually cross-examine the structure of the system in detail in order to understand or discover more about it and all the elements that makes the system function in a on-going cyclical that hold the jewels of the future hostage; our precise youth.

It takes lot of courage for me to face off with the young men because looking at them is deja-vu and a trip because I was able to look at their situation from the outside looking in instead of being on the inside looking at the outcome of poor decisions that lead up to me being in their predicament if not worst.

Going back into the halls was empowering because I was able to actually see the young men's eyes light up from all the positive energy that we all shared with each other. Looking them in the eyes and taking longer looks at their living conditions gave me more reason to commit myself to being a role model who will lead by example in order to open up more doors for the them and prove that change is possible.

It was a true blessing to me because I can recall times when I was in CYA (California Youth Authority) where I vowed to myself that I once I got out I would "keep it real," by sharing my real life revelations and love with the misguided youth who are going up against a crafty criminal justice system within a twisted society.

Setting foot in the halls and being able to make that natural connection with everyone was truly a dream come true. Thank God!!! Much love and respect goes out to all the young Soul Survivors in Alameda, Santa Clara, YGC, CYA, prison and all the other traps throughout the system.

No matter what, continue to strive to better yourself, keep faith in a high power because I have come before you all as a blessed young man from the (Ha! Ha!) block, now living my dreams against all odds.

Oh! And to all the CYA staff, I told you I was going to be the shining light on my young street souljahs to attack your job security.

Now for the topics that were discussed in our workshops prior to the writing is first off, "When Will It Be Your Time To Quit The Game?" - What we mean by "the game" is either you being out on the block selling rocks (or other drugs), or you running the streets with your 'hood or set. Since we all know death and jail come with the territory, will one of those things have to come to you before you're ready to quit the game? If not, when will it be your time to quit the game? If not now, when? What needs to happen before you quit? Will it be something drastic? Will you just wake up one morning and feel like it's not for you any more, or will you fail to wake up and take it one step too far? Give us your ideas on when it will be your time to quit the game.

Second topic, "Where's the love?" — We always hearing young people speaking about haterism. For example, "He/she was hating on me. Why you hating on my clothes/ car/ jewelry? Why you hating on my man/woman/patna? Don't hate the playa, hate the game!" Etc. Etc. But even with all the anti-haterism message we get, we seldom hear about young people showing love. We see the mean mugging, the fighting, thefts/ property jacks and shootings — but where's the love? What the Beat wants to know is this: If everyone is so anti-hate, why is it that we see so little love?

Lastly, "Ghosts? Spirits? Angels?" — Do you believe in ghosts/ reincarnation/angels? Have you ever felt the presence of a ghost, seen one, or know someone who has? Would you be scared if you had a ghost encounter? Do you think these things are superstitious or are they real?

Lastly, allow us to reintroduce our latest editorial note writing contest, which will be continued/open through the month of May, given our mailing has been very sporadic. Forgive us. The topic remains, "Turning Back the Hands Of Time." Tell us if you could turn back the hands of time would you? How far back would you go? What would you change? How would your life have turned out differently? Sure you could also tell us that you would not turn the hands back, but tell us why is that? Turning back the hands of time is a phrase we have heard time and time again, so tell us your take on it. Share your story, share your thoughts. If you had such power to rid the pains that have brought you to such a place would you turn the hands of time back?

Like we said, this contest is open to all Beat writers. All submissions need to be in by the end of May, 2006. We will always honor pieces that come in up to a week late. The First-place writer will receive a one-hundred dollar money order. Second place receives fifty-dollars, and third and fourth place will receive twenty-five dollars each. Best of luck writers, in telling us your written story/poem that relates to turning back the hands of time.

Before we call it an editorial note, lets congratulate our latest POW winners: From the 150 Crew they are, Lil' Jt, Tiffany, Lil' Jamar, Chocolate Baby, Shotgun, Alan, Dada, Lil' D, Baby Taz, and Just a Writer. From SF/YGC we have Lil' Lazy, Steve, Alavarado. From Marin who wrote two POWs, Scorpion. Last but not least A Young Writer from Santa Cruz.

This one goes out to all the children of our communities. Lets do our part to make this a better world for our young ones! Keep up the writing and sharing the love, we'll see you next week!

T A B L E O F C O N T E N T S

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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Counselor's Corner

From The Beat: The following piece comes from our favorite counselor, Ms. Wadud, a 150 Crew Counselor, who shares with us a little advice on forgiving our parents. Maintaining relationships is always hard and without communication it's almost impossible. It's so great to have Ms. Wadud featured in The Beat Within! Attention counselors, it's an honor to know you all, and we know how busy you are, but remember it's not hard to write a little something, something for us readers. Take five minutes, share a little advice and submit it to The Beat Within and you'll touch thousands of lives. Thanks again Ms. Wadud!

Parenting

As Salaam Alaikum, Beat readers, it's been a minute since I last wrote. Not because I didn't want to. I have just been experiencing writer's block!

We, as humans, have many emotions and feelings that we express everyday. Sometimes, the people who love us do things to hurt us. God forgives us for all our sins if we ask Him, so we should be just as willing to forgive one another for the things that we may do or say, too, 'cause each other hurt.

You heard many kids say, "I can't stand my mother or I hate that b—", that drives me crazy. I don't care what religion you follow. All the ones that believe in God state that you must honor your mother and father. That means, next to God, they should be the things that you have the highest regard, the greatest love for!

I've heard grown people say, "I haven't spoken to my mom in months." That bugs me out! Your mother?! I'm 48 years old and I live in California and my parents live in New York. I've lived here for 11 years and not a day goes by that I don't call my parents' home, speak to them, find out if they need anything, etc.

People say (mostly kids) "My mother wasn't there for me" or "she's on drugs," or "she's in jail." I tell them to pray for her.

If you want to know what a word means, look in the dictionary. If you need to know how to cook, there is a cookbook. If you need to know how to fix a car, there are auto manuals. If you want to know about God, there are Bibles, Korans, Torah's, etc., but if you want to know how to be a parent, THERE ARE NO PARENTING BOOKS! You have to go with what you know! Anyways, forgive and always, always, love your parents.

As Salaam Alaikum,

-Ms. Wadud, 150 Crew Counselor

Hurting Inside

Things are always on my mind
 I feel lonely, sad some of the time
 In my head, I say "ef the game"
 Robbing, killing, it's always the same old thang
 Everyday, pain in my eyes is what I see
 But I can't let the devil take control of me
 Three hundred and sixty-five days a year
 Dying is what the most I fear
 Seeing my family crying tears
 Because I'm in here and not there
 I'm cryin'
 I hurt
 Can't you see
 Why can't nobody hear me
 My mind I'm tryin' to get these
 Memories off
 But my soul seems to be lost
 You don't know my situation
 My mind, my body, is always racin'
 I'm in pain
 On my pillow I cry tears of rain
 Because mostly every day I feel the same
 Why am I always in so much in emotion
 That my mind, my body, seem to be coastin'
 But in slow motion
 Why am I always so lonely
 Grandma — why did you die
 I needed you to hold me
 To my heart you hold the key
 Open it so I can stop feeling ruefully
 So I can stop these tears from flowin' that you see
 I just want to see what life brings
 I want to see it to my surprising
 But how can I stop this loneliness
 Inside and stop myself from crying

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It requires a daily treatment fueled by your desire to rise to a higher level, when you're out in the world to escape the clutches of the devil who comes at you in so many different ways, manipulating hearts and minds everyday. Just focus on doing the next right thing and then the next. Just keep doing your best, and we know you'll pass the test. Then as day to day you continue to achieve the kind of life you know in your heart you need to live — the pain will slowly subside inside, pushed aside by all the joys of man fully alive, living right day and night. Your lifelong tears will dry as you begin to see the world with new eyes. Meanwhile, continue to strive.

Where You From?

Does where you live make you hard? Or is the kind of music you listen to? Is it the color of your skin? Or maybe it's the way you talk. Ignorant people think you're a punk if you're not from Oakland or living in a ghetto. Or they think you're a square if you don't listen to rap music, if you're not "going dumb?"

Some people think you're a square and a punk if you're white and you pronounce your words properly. It makes me mad when people think your less then them because of stuff like that.

The other day this black girl tried to punk me because she saw me as a quiet white girl, but by the time I was done with her she was apologizing at my door and trying to kiss my butt.

At school today I was called a square because I talk like I have some sense. Oh and I asked this boy where he was from and he said East Oakland then yelled his block number or turf or something in my face and then asked me where I was from. I told him I was from Alameda. He looked at me and said, "Alameda?" He then turned back around in his chair. Maybe I should have yelled my street name at him, Pacific Ave.

You know, I used to listen to rap music, I have aunts and cousins that live in Oakland and visit them often, I used to talk "ghetto." But that wasn't me, although when I get angry my ghetto side still tends to come out.

I've spent 18years trying to find the real me. I don't think I've completely found out yet, but from what I know so far I am an Asian-White girl. I like to pronounce my words correctly, I like to listen to rock music but sometimes enjoy listening to rap, not often though because I hate the way some rap talks about sex, money, and drugs. I'm from Alameda and I'm not a punk. So for those of you who think you can beat people up because they're not from Oakland, listen to music other than rap, are Caucasian, or pronounce their words properly, think again, because sometimes those are the ones you gotta look out for.

-Tiffany, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thank you for this great piece! It's so refreshing to hear the words of one of our young writers who thinks it's cool to be who they are and not succumb to the temptations and pressures all around you yet can still defend herself in tough situations (and with a sense of humor it would seem!). But try to remember that growing up in the "ghetto" - or in other words poor - is not a choice. The influences around many of the young people that you encounter may not provide the correct pronunciation of words, or may include violence and drug use at home. While you may often be trying to just keep your head up and deal with kids at school and on the block, remember that you could be a positive influence with the kids you're talking about if you can try to find a common language.

High Love

Marie Jane,

I miss you, baby. I wish you I could be with you, girl. I remember when I used to break you down, lock bars on you, roll you so tight that you look extra beautiful on the brown peach coat. All my homies loved you, even my homegirls. Everything between us is love—breakin', lickin', kissin', rollin' you aroun' in a rotation. I love how you dress—always in green with red, green with yellow, green straight up, or 'specially when you wear the beautiful dark purple dress.

When you got your Mexican dress on, people call you "Bammer," but when you got your Colombian dress on, they call you "the Bomb." When I'm with you, you make me forget about all my problems. You take the stress out of me and relax me. Whenever I'm mad, I just give you a little hit and you make me calm down. Every time I kiss you, I feel so high.

See, I love you, but my mom hate you. She always know when I'm with you, 'cause you always leave your perfume all over my shirt and 'cause the way my eyes look. My eyes

always got a stupid bloodshot color.

You get me in trouble with my mom and with the law, too, 'cause even if I don't see you for a minute, you stay in my system. I get piss tested and it's a rap. Just for being with you, I violate my probation and sometimes I caught cases with you and I get a stay-away order from you.

But, see, I don't care. I love you and I will always be with you. It don't matter what society thinks. When I'm with you, 'cause, look, I been with you since I was eleven years old. Now I'm seventeen. You have never hurt my feelings, but people say you kill my brain cells. I don't know how, if you make me think more about what I do, so that means that you make my brain work, so I don't care what they say. I just love you and that's how it's gon' be, for life. All right.

-Lil' Lazy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That was a well-written piece. It is clear to see that you are devote to staying in contact with a love that many look down on for their own reasons. The bottom line is this, it's not what you do, but how you do it. If this lady is taking priority over the things that should be put first maybe you should find a new way to relieve yourself instead of depending on something that can certainly get you in trouble.

Memories Of An Abused Child

Let me take you on a journey
Into the memories of an abused child
I remember waking up some mornings
To a pitcher of water being dumped upon my face
Soaking my old 49er pillow case
And making my dark brown hair black with moisture
I remember being pushed to the ground
And then suffocated by my beanbag chair
The weight of a loved one pressing and holding
I remember my parents locking me in my room
And then inviting friends over, my friends
I remember my room being stripped of everything
Including the clothes off my back
I remember being thrown into things
Like the family rag doll or punching bag
Not a son or even something worth speaking to
Just a scapegoat, an excuse

Something to blame the unexplainable on
I remember waking up from nightmares, screaming
My parents telling me to shut up or else
I remember my family laughing at me
And then laughing harder when I got angry
I remember being sick all over the floor
And my parents making me clean it up
And then grounding me for the stain
I remember not having a biological mom growing up
I remember the sounds of my father taking off his belt
The leather snapping like fireworks
I remember a lot
My memories are those of an abused child

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Wow. You drop some great pain on us readers. We are so sorry for what you endured as a child. It must be awful for you to remember those memories long enough to write this poem about them. We hope you can create a home situation for yourself, when you get out, free and safe of anyone who abuses you. You totally have our hearts. We hope our readers recognize your courage and see the importance to release some of the scars of one's past. Keep sounding off friend, we're here!

Hasta Que Me Pusieron Aqui

La vida es todo un juego, un juego para vivir. Haces las cosas bien o para morir. Yo he hecho muchas cosas malas en mi vida y hasta que me pusieron en un cuarto es cuando me di cuenta que yo no quiero amanecer en una caja por el resto de mi vida o muerto.

Nada grave tiene que pasar para yo entender el juego. Yo soy muy inteligente en esta vida para hacer las cosas mejor en mi vida. Ya no quiero robar, vender marihuana, hacer todas estas cosas que el todo poderoso dice que no puedo hacer.

Lo mejor en esta vida de este juego tan duro, es siempre tener tu educación. Sin eso es muy difícil para hacer este billete legal. La educación le va a dar trabajo, un futuro, disciplina, y billete para comprar lo que te de la gana y dar lo que le de la gana. El juego de la vida es un juego que se tiene que aprender a jugar.

From The Beat: Te felicitamos porque estas aprendiendo de tus errores. No necesitas estar en este juego. Eres inteligente y estamos viendo que estas usando tu inteligencia en pensar en lo mejor para ti. En vender drogas o estar en las calles, nada bueno vas a lograr. La ideas y pensamientos positivos los tienes ahí, lo único que te falta es ponerlos en marchas. Nosotros nos daría mucho gusto al igual que tu familia si te vieramos bien realizado, con una buena educación, buen trabajo y formando una buena familia. No dejes que nadie te tire abajo en ningún momento.

Until They Put Me In Here

Life is all a game, a game to live. Do things right or to die. I have done a lot of bad things in my life until they put me in a room. That's when I realized that I do not want to wake up in a box for the rest of my life or dead.

Nothing severe needs to happen in order for me to understand the game. I am very intelligent in this life to make things better in my life. I don't want to rob anymore, sell marijuana, and to all these things that the Almighty says I cannot do.

The best thing in the life of this game so hard, is always having your education. Without that, it's very difficult to make this legal paper. An education is going to give you a job, a future, discipline, and money to buy whatever the heck you want and to give whatever the heck you want. The game of life is a game that one has to learn how to play.

-Steve B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We congratulate you because you're learning from your mistakes. You don't need to be in this game. You are intelligent and we're seeing that you're using your intelligence to think about what's best for you. By selling drugs or being out on the streets, you're not going to obtain anything positive. You have the ideas and positive thoughts in you. The only thing that you're missing is to put them in motion. We, along with your family, would love to see a realization of what you wrote on paper: You having a good education, a good job, and forming a good family. Don't let anyone put you or throw you down at any moment.

Quisiera Dejar Las Calles

No sé, yo quisiera dejar las calles pero al mismo tiempo me pongo a pensar lo que pasara si sigo en las calles, si volviera a la cárcel. La verdad es que no quiero votar mi juventud en la cárcel. Pienso en mi hijo y en mi familia. Pienso en Dios, quien me bendijo y me dijo, "querer a tu prógimo como a ti mismo." Pero yo miro que no se puede porque si yo dejo de vender drogas otras nuevas personas lo van a hacer.

Quiero que esto de la calle nadie la detiene.

Como me aconseja mucha gente que deje la calle. Mis hermanos, mis amigos y toda la gente que me tiene aprecia me ponen pretextos para que no vaya a la cárcel.

Me dicen o mira, hay para ti en tal casa para que me quede, pero yo les digo, mira yo quisiera quedarme pero la calle me llama. No me esperes que venga tarde. la calle esta que arde.

From The Beat: Sabemos que es duro dejar la calle de la noche a la mañana, pero si no tratas ni comienzas nunca vas a poder dejarlo. Hay mucha gente que quiere lo mejor para ti. Date la oportunidad de escucharlos y seguir sus consejos. Estamos seguro que si los escuchas, seras un hombre mejor. Acuérdate que esta gente ya pasaron por tu etapa, y si te dicen algo es porque ello lo saben. No pases por muchas cosas negativas que marquen tu vida para poder cambiar. Nos encanta la forma como te expresastes. No dejes de escribirnos.

I Would Like To Leave The Streets

I don't know, I would like to leave the streets, but at the same time, I start to think about what would happen if I remained on the streets, if I would return to jail. The truth is, I don't want to throw away my youth in jail. I think about my son and about my family. I think about God, who blessed me and He told me, "Love the person next to you like you love yourself," but I see that it is not possible because if I stop selling drugs, other new people are going to do it.

I want no one to hold back this thing of the streets.

Oh how many people advice me to leave the streets. My brothers, my friends, and all the people who have esteem for me give me warnings so I don't go to jail.

They tell, hey look, there's a place for you in this or that person's house so I can have a place to stay, but I tell them, look, I would love to stay, but the streets is calling me. Don't wait for me to come late. The streets is where it burns.

-Alvarado B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We know it is hard to leave the streets overnight, but if you don't try nor start, you'll never be able to leave it. There are a lot of people that want what's best for you. Give yourself the opportunity to hear them out and follow their advice. We're sure that if you hear them out, you'll be a better man. Keep in mind that these people have already been through your stage, and if they tell you something, it's because they know. Don't go through many negative things that leave a mark on your life in order for you to change. We loved the way you expressed yourself. Don't stop writing to us, OK?

If You Really Knew Me

If you really knew me — oh
If you really knew me, you'd know
How far I've come, and the trouble I've seen.
The steps I've climbed to appreciate my being
And oh so many other things.
If you really knew me, you'd know
What an intelligent man I have grown to be,
Now that I put family before anything
And keep them closest to my heart in me.
If you only knew the life I had to accept
And things I did that other people thought not to do,
The scales of my personality, weighing
both my heart and people who enter through.
If you really knew me, you'd know the exact person I am,
And all the love there is inside me still to give.
You'd know how valuable life is,
And you'd understand when I say, "To die is to live."
If you really knew me, you would know how a mind
Like mine stays well-oiled and continues to tick,
How and what nourishes me, and what also makes me
sick.
If you really knew me, you would know what makes me
happy
And know precisely what brings me down,
What lifts me up and what drops me cruelly to the ground
— if you only knew.

-Lil' Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We know the complexity of this young man who writes in our pages every week to help us understand not only where he's been and who he was, but where he's going by what he does today and in every word he thinks to write and say. We see a young man of great capacity only now inheriting the gifts of demanding veracity from himself, ready to face the world with all it takes to change not only himself and his personal fate but the fate of all who will heed his voice and the words of a higher self inside their hearts and souls and minds — use instead of rue this time to find more than they ever knew or would ever live to see out on the grind. We are all more than the chains that bound us to a past in which we need no longer remain. Now that you've opened your eyes, continue to rise, and send us poems to advise.

**If you really knew me,
you'd know
What an intelligent man I
have grown to be**

Seven Days In The Hospital

Hey everyone – let me tell you how I lived my life. Recently I tried to kill myself. For one thing – I was sexually assaulted. Then I tried to overdose on pills, and to cut.

If it wasn't for a homeboy calling 911, I wouldn't have survived. I was placed on 5150 hold for two weeks. I was sent from Watsonville Hospital to El Camino in Mountain View.

I am on anti-depressants and doing much better. Because I was a VICTIM, I tried to take my life.

Today I feel a lot better and I'm doing a lot better. I just want everyone to know that you shouldn't take your life for granted. And if you're a girl, don't let a man take advantage of you.

-A young writer, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Thank you for telling us your story. We're very glad that your homeboy had the presence of mind to call 911. We salute his quick thinking and we admire your courage in sharing your story. We're sure you've learned a lot from your terrifying experience. It's always a good idea to find a friendly ear when there are things you need to get out. And don't forget that a pencil and paper can be very useful, too. You need to talk about what's bothering you. We all do.

Dear God (Prayer)

Dear God,
I don't want to walk past someone
And desperately snatch their purse
I don't want to picture myself lying in a hearse
I don't want to end up dead because I can't control my
outburst
I don't want to be the only one not knowing your word
And that's what my heart thirst
I want to be able to think and not react first
I want to be cared for, loved, cherished, and nursed
I need to be an angel divine
My inside "true self" is something
I'm trying to find,
But at the same time
I'm falling behind
Me being me,
Not caring or kind
Only care for what's mine
Had the audacity to cross that line
I want to have fear in holding AK-47's and Tech 9's
My mother's rules, I wanna abide
Stay in the house and keep my butt from outside
I want to fulfill my effort instead of saying, "I tried"
I don't want to hear no more lies
I'm tired of tears falling out my eyes
Dear God,
I don't want to be confused anymore
My family's bond is already torn
I wanna look up instead of down at this floor
The day I die
I want my soul to soar
So I can walk through heaven's door
I don't want to be afraid
My corpse will sink to Earth's core
I'm just asking for the Lord
This is not the life nor century to live
Because in my heart
It's so hard to forgive
It's easy to breathe,
But you may not pass the quiz
Oh dear God,
I'm scared to take my last breath,
But I have one last request
May I be remembered at the time of my death.
Amen

-Chocolate Baby, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Chocolate Baby, we feel the desperation in your words. What are you scared of exactly? We will all die one day, that's inescapable, but your life, that's where you have power. Decisions with benefits and/or consequences. Don't give up on your freewill. God is there to show you a/the way, but you must decide which way you will go. What do you want to be remembered for?

I Can Hear Spirits

I can hear spirits walking down the halls
When I'm completely silent and still
Their voices, sullen and faint, echo eerily
Otherwise, at this time of night
There is no noise
My towel covers the crack under the door
To keep the warmth in and the snakes out
My own steady breathing
And the sound of my pen scratching paper
Washes over echoes of previous prisoners
Their tears silent as they walk down the halls

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Wonderful, evocative poem. Do you ever stop writing when you hear these spirits of prisoners past and listen to their stories? If so, maybe they're delighted that someone is living in your cell who is sensitive enough to be able to understand and empathize with what they've suffered, and can record through writing, their tales. Powerful moving poem to say the least.

My Mother The Hero

My mom is the strongest person I know. She values her beliefs and won't accept compromise if someone dares to challenge her about them. Coincidentally she is the nicest person you could ever want to meet. If you show her respect she will treat like one of the family.

My father's unexpected passing put a lot of unneeded stress upon her already overburdened shoulders. Not only taking on his debts, now she had to provide for two growing boys. That may not seem like a lot but with the last 18 years spent taking care of her sick husband, and the only job she ever had was a receptionist for a small doctor's office 20 years prior, it sort of complicated things.

I hardly remember my mother crying when my father passed. I do remembered that she kept me and my brother going, we could hardly function but she made up man and keep on goin' even though she put on this strong front I knew she was torn up inside. The faint sobs I heard from her room in the middle of the night, how she wouldn't really smile for the following month after the funeral, but she'd put on what looked more like a grimace than a smile. I think my mom is worse off than my dad, because the love of her life, her best friend for over 20 years, is dead and now she would have to live without him.

I am getting too far ahead of myself. Let me go back and tell you a little bit about my mom before the tragic event of my father's death.

My mom was constantly happy. She loved to work in her garden; digging, watering her flowers or chopping down a tree. Anything to do with God's glorious outdoors made her as excited as a five year old in a candy shop - sugar rush included. She is a devoted Christian, it just so happens that she met my father in a church. She used to drag me and my brother, kicking and screaming, to church every Sunday. At the church she helped with the youth program, and her and my father taught Bible Study to kids 15019 years old. Eventually as my father got sicker and my brother and I got more stubborn, we stopped going as a family. My mom still went to the early service and most of the time I didn't even know she went, because I was still sleeping when she got back.

My mom was my alarm clock. Every occasion where being on time was required I would have been tardy to if it wasn't for her. It was almost impossible for her to get me to go to school. Now baseball is different though. My dad used to coach the team but my mom was the official driver

My parents owned a 1993 Ford Station Wagon and my mom would make trips to pick up all o four team and gear and get them to the gangs and practices on time. I remember one time after a gang my brother and a friend were messin' around after the game and my brother thought he could strike out his friend and asked my mom to catch for him. A foul ball was tipped back at my mom and hit her in the eye, giving her the biggest black eye I've ever seen. She grabbed a bag of ice and offered to continue catching. That's how much she cared about us playing baseball. She was the same with basketball, making sure we made it on time. But baseball was the main sport for our family.

She never had any time to have friends of her own, other than the parents connected to the various sports we were involved in. She had her "best friends," you know people she

My mom is the strongest person I know. She values her beliefs and won't accept compromise if someone dares to challenge her about them.

has known for years. But they all moved away from California a long time ago: It cost too much for her to send letters and get replies every now and then. Most of her time was spent taking care of my dad, since he has passed, she's had some time to really live her life. She constantly talks to her friends and meets up with them every chance she gets. Now she is even comfortable going out with men on casual dates. She was even talking to a guy that got his ass beat by my dad when they were 20 years old. I am really happy for my mom, my brother really hates it, But I think it's great that my mom is out socializing with people. After 18 years of taking are of my dad, she is really getting' out and having her fun.

I really love my mom and I would do anything for her and vice versa. She is one of the most caring and likable people you would ever meet. I just wish everyone had a mom like mine.

-Shotgun, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This isn't just the story of a remarkable woman but of a remarkable family - all that love between her and your dad, even under awful circumstances, all that love you feel for her and she feels for you, and especially all the love and cheer she seems to have filled the house with. We know that you have a rough few years coming up, but we also think that love will keep you up through it, and that you're a person who can come out of incarceration a stronger and better person. Peace, and thank you for this wonderful portrait - right in time for Mother's Day, too!

A Fact

you think it's cool
going around having sex is cool
then you waking up one morning going to the doctor
test said it's positive — now look who's a fool
because the girl you had sex with lied
so you despise what you see in her eyes
and now you recognize 'cause you alive
but sooner or later you gonna die
so the fact is the girl gave you aids
and you know what you got
we reading the newspaper and it says the boy
spending twenty-five to life because the girl been shot
sitting in jail wishing the night you had sex
the condom was on
the girl six feet under the ground
family crying at home because the girl now gone
wasted your life having sex with a girl you didn't ever know
judge slam' the hammer
now is time for your life to go
the girl gave him aids
think 'bout it day by day
and the boy always think about when his life 'bout to end
he committed a crime but he know god can forgive his sins
so i'm tryin'a tell you kids
that the virus is a very big attraction
if a person gave you aids
take responsibility for your action
i hope you hear the words that i say
because the speech i'm giving you about aids
gonna affect your life one day
h i v — s t d — can cost you your life
all it is — is a matter of how you roll the dice
rolled the dice hit seven/eleven and i'm on the right track
i'm giving you this speech because i got your back
i got your back so whose back you 'bout to get
you better save some kid's life before the time start to tick
tick — tock — tick — tock — tick — tock
live your life 'cause it's the only one you got

-Alan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You reach out to the readers of this 'zine with wisdom revealed to anyone willing to see, 'cause so many young folks refuse to look ahead to the consequences of what they do in bed. It's so easy to use protection, it's hard to understand why so many are rejecting reality — when just as you say it could end in a double fatality. And even if you don't get a disease, how many are ready to be parents in their teens? So that condom protects you twice, 'cause one thoughtless moment and your world can change overnight! Thanks the wise rhymes you write.

Up's And Down's — Down And Out

I done been through it all
Up's and down's, down and out.
I done had one of them sheisty
Lil' girlfriends stealin' out my house.
I ain't no player but I know the game like one.
I ain't no sucka but I ain't afraid to say
that I hung around some.
Players, pimps, gangsta's and
hustlers I rolled wit' all my life.
Sucka's, haters and fake ninjas,
We done had fist and gun fights.
Purple pills and bo' I used to kill my stress.
Murders, jail time, and kidnapping,
Was a regular life in my Oakland streets.
I came up around hell but
I forced myself to think it was heaven.
Doing bad, tell' myself it was good
But I guess that's part of living life in the 'hood.
Purses, wallets, and cars
Is what we stole late nights.
Gunfire, car wrecks, and hollerin'
Is what you heard after they turned on the street lights.

-Dada, 150 Crew

From The Beat: When you choose to write a poem that tells the flat-out truth, it comes so hard that it gives your readers' minds bruise. The honesty and brutality combine with an insightful mentality (like "doing bad, tell' myself it was good") to illuminate the reality of where you've been and what you've done — adapting to life in hell will for sure obscure your vision, it's only human, given what you were seeing other folks doing. But now that you've achieved this wisdom, you have the power to start to make your own decision of who you want to be — and it will change both what you do and see (yet nothing happens instantly, except the flashes of insight fired by your mentality).

Take The People In Your Life Serious: A Message For My Daughter

Hey this is Lil' D from Oakland, just continuin' my piece about which will it be your time to quit the game. This is just a little message to my little girl Mykhya, my baby daughter.

I know you young and you ain't going to read this, but yo' daddy is probably gon' be out of your life for a short time because of the decisions I made in life. But I just want you to know that I love you with all my heart and I miss you. I'll be praying for you every day and night. Just know that after this time is a wrap, I'm not gon' do nothing stupid no more. It's time for me to quit this game because look where it put me.

Well baby, I hope I see you every visiting day, I love you from daddy.

This is just a message to all you out there and in here that got babies or that's going to have babies. A baby is the most beautiful thing that could ever happen in a person's life. Man ya gotta get your shhh straight and dedicate the time that you got to your little ones because you don't know when somethin' bad might happen.

Much love to all y'all that read this piece. Pray for me, because I'll be praying for you.

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This piece is heartbreaking and beautiful, and we know that even if she can't read yet, your little girl will know that her daddy loves her, so long as you make every effort you can to be in her life, both while you're on lockdown and when you get out. Meanwhile, we hope other people that read this in The Beat are as moved as we were when we read it.

**A baby is the most beautiful thing that
could ever happen in a person's life. Man
ya gotta get your shhh straight and
dedicate the time that you got to your
little ones because you don't know when
somethin' bad might happen**

Game

Been in the game
Since I was a young buck
Throwing my 'hood up
Like I don't give a shhh
Seen my closest potnas
Dead at my feet
It hurts to think
They six feet deep
But in reality
They up in the sky
Wanting me to get out
Before I die
Makin' changes
Is such a hard thing
I gotta get out
Before I grow some wings
But my enemies
Keep acting a foo'
Sticking to me
Like I was glue
But once I get out
I'm done
I did my dirt
Had my fun
Time
To put my rag away
'Cause the good me
Is here to stay
Kept it simple
I'm out — late

-Just A Writer, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Yeah, sure, if you're just a writer, then we say, "Write 'till you die!" 'Cause you're showing courage and pride to all those with eyes to see it. No, it doesn't suddenly get easier just because you know putting your rag away is the only (or best) way to go. Every challenge you faced as a banger will still come your way in disguise, everything that tried to take you down over which you had to rise — but over time, after time, your mind see a whole new reality: enemies will fade from sight 'cause they're off looking for a different fight, and respect will grow in the eyes of your family, young and old alike. We could praise you forever, but ... to keep it simple: just do right.

No Escape

Picture in your head that you are in a dark room in a chair tied up. You can't see anything at all except a light in the ceiling. It's a small light but still you can see it.

All right. Now imagine the dark room is the world, the chair that ties you up is the struggles you go through in life, and the light is hope. That's how it is for some people in this world tryin' to find their way, but it's too dark and you can't see. So they're struggling in the dark, trying to find a way, yet they fall, and keep falling until they're tired of it and just stay down.

Then they see a way out, but it's the wrong way. He's doing crime to survive and after a while it's been so long it came as an instinct. After a while it's been so long since he's seen light that he starts to turn.

Now all he feels is pain hate, and hurt, cause he's been in the dark and suddenly finds there's no escape.

-Baby Taz, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We'll add one more thing to this incredible description of that dark journey. The light isn't just hope, it's also the light of knowledge, like the light you shine when you describe this scene so well, when you make us all see it the way you do. Have you been on this path in your life? If so, how have you kept yourself from "turning"... What is the escape from this dismal trajectory? You're the poet, show us the way!

I Still Don't Believe In "Ghosts"

I remember a time when I was like nine years old. Me and my family lived in a house on the east side of Fresno.

Well down the block from our house was a "haunted" house. At least that's what my friends called it. They all said some witch lived there and was killed, but her ghost stayed to keep people away. I was never a superstitious person so I always said something like "There ain't no such thing as ghosts and witches."

So they dared me to go in the house. We all know how dares are when you're little. Me and two of my older friends went in that house the next night. When we walked a little further into it, the door slammed. We ended up running out the back door. I was the last one out or the house with my friend in front of me. Suddenly he fell like he was clothes-lined.

When we got to my house-which was the closest-my friend said his chest hurt so he took off his shirt. I believed the wind or someone was trying to scare us and that my friend ran into something. But when we went back in the day nothing was in the yard that couldn't done it. Though I can't explain what really happen that night, I still don't believe in ghosts.

-R, 150 Crew

From The Beat: First and foremost, this is a great story. Retelling a childhood event always seem easier than it is because all of the details and the memories that make the story come alive are floating around in our memories. You have managed to pull out some of those key details to recreate a scene so that we the reader feel like we were watching it unfold. After all of this, we are surprised that you are so adamant in your belief that there isn't anything out there, be it ghosts, spirits or something. To each his own, right?



Thinking of the Game

I get high when I'm sober
 I get weak when I should have strength
 I get good when I don't do anything
 I get hurt when I feel safe
 I get calm when I'm hyphy
 I get hot when I'm cool
 I get confidence when I'm on my streets doing what I do
 I get hated when I'm doing well
 I get hard when I hold my ground
 I get soft when I'm around any beautiful girl
 I get the spirit when I'm on the run
 I get through the hard times when no one cares
 I get paid when I'm needed for my son
 I get on the grind when I get off track
 I get slick when I'm stupid
 I get up when my hood or family go down
 I get hit when I don't want to
 I hit back when the time is right
 I am no sucka to my community
 But I go out to my mama
 I pray when I'm down
 I'm in the game 'cause the game is in my life.

-Kip Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: As a description of your life, this poem is terrific, it shows all these different facets of your personality, like a ten-sided die from a dice game... it also shows how much conflict you have inside you: There's the part of you that's all about the love, and then there's the part that still holds onto hate and violence. Which side of you is going to be the strongest, in the end?

Rules of the Game

I don't really know when it's time to quit the game' cause I was born into it. Stuff gets hectic but you got to work wit' it, or work around it if you smart. People always try to mess wit the game. You trust them like family. and they end up puttin' bullets in your flesh or they snitch on you.

The system don't really care about anyone but they wallets, they take people's belongings and sell it for profit. They want us to fail. That's why I stay on my hustle. They tax us for cds and tapes that we make and sell to help out our families or feed up ourselves.

When times get drastic, like Hurricane Katrina, they act like they can't help us, but they provide us wit' shhh that only get us under their belts, like drugs and guns that eventually get us messed up.

They have their own game, and they been improving on it since the Atlantic Slave trade, and it gets better and better: like the three strikes law. They get mad because I try to prepare for the future and feed myself. So they put traps around me and when I get caught wit' guns they ask me where I got them from - and they don't say nothing... but the truth is they gave it to me.

-Urckle, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is some deep thinking right here, and we're not going to pretend that some of it isn't true. Since you decided to up your game by taking our question to a political level - now we ask you, if the system "gave" you that gun, do you have the power to put it down? They may have their own game, but since your eyes are open, you don't have to be their pawn, do you. You can turn your back on all the b-s and find a better way. What would that way look like.

When Will I Leave The Game?

The game is deep; the game is thick
When will it be my time to quit?
Even if it's selling drugs, even rocks
When will I leave the block?
Mind of money, full of greed
When will I quit the weed?
Hate for my mom grows bigga and bigga
No pops--some fool just happened to pull the trigger
Life goes on; I try to let it go
But it's not a great life; to let you know
I do what I do to get mine
If it's hustling or selling on that grind
This life I'm livin' is not mine
I'm meant to do more; I'm meant to shine
Lying and stealing is what I'm good at
Ask any ninja; they'll be, like, "True, that"
I hope I live a better life
And not to have to live from night to night
But in the meanwhile, I'm gonna do what I do
And keep it slick
But when will it be my time to quit?

-Lil' E, Marin

From The Beat: You ask all the right questions. What are your answers? What has to happen for you to stop lying and stealing? Where does your mom fit into all this? Why do you hate her? How do your lying, stealing and going to juvy affect her/you? What do you wish your life were like? How do you plan to maneuver your life into the one you want?

when will it be my
time to quit?

Where The Love?

Yea, where is the love?
'Cause it sure ain't enough
People hatin'; people discriminatin'
But not enough lovin'
You say, "Don't hate the playa, hate the game"
But you hatin' just the same
Hatin' yourself; not using yo' real name
The name your mom gave you
Makin' a nickname and just actin' a fool
See me? I'm different. I use my family name
'Cause my family is all I got in this game
An' yea, that's NGO—my family name
And I'm telling you—Ain't nothin' gonna change

-Ngo LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Wow, what an in your face poem, Ngo. It takes a lot of courage, to put yourself out there and to tell it as you see it. Remember, we are all different, and what's going to make you happy in due time is being around people that spread some love but that's going to take you making a change for the better. What's the plan to get back home, to find happiness?

Something To Think About

This Gues saying w'at's up with all you Beat readers? If you be out there on the block selling rocks, sellin' guns, and shooting at cats, then you need to change unless you ready to do "25 with an L."

If you not, then you need to change now because when the book gets thrown at you it's too late to try and change. And it will get thrown at you. I know that all the clothes, cars, and jewelry in the world isn't more important then your freedom. If it is then let me know.

-Gbb B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds like you've got your priorities straight. Freedom and your loved ones should all come before the material items. How long did it take you to realize this? What made you change?

Run On Sentence Poem

I'm in a position to die
Hopin' to cry
But these tears
Won't fall from my eyes
My lids are always dry
But the sky
Cries for all the times
That I've never had a home
Singing my lonely song
It's a song that's straight from the heart
Because my anger won't soon part
My heart's
Always been dark
Always been drawn
To midnight in the park
I'm smart
But I get myself in trouble
With words I'm fluent
But everything else
Gets me in trouble
But sometimes I want a girl
Who I can kiss and cuddle
But never again
Will I feel that snuggle
I'm now a felon
Women see me

And get to yellin'
I hate it
Because it's something I did
Not who I am
I'm a scream this
As loud as I can
I'm not a kid anymore
I'm a damn man
I can take care of myself
With my own two hands
I'm doing the best I can
So don't call me a kid
I've already felt enough pain
For what I did
It's bad enough
That I said what I said
Fine, you can say
I'm sick in the head
Oh, you also wish me dead?
Wow! That's a new one
Yeah, right
That one's been said
But people always try
To mess with my head
That's just life
I used to want
Three kids and a wife
But I chose instead
To cause her strife

And I'll never forget
All the hype
I'm usually nice
But I can be cruel
About two years ago
I dropped out of school
Took drugs and stayed up
And thought I was cool
Man, I'm sitting in a puddle of drool
Then I'm the biggest pimp there was
Because I'm done
My hand is cramping up
And it's no longer fun
To go on
And that's my poem

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Sometimes someone can be so profoundly hurt and sad that he or she can't cry outside, but cries all the time inside. Some people even cry in their sleep. Wouldn't it be a relief if you could really cry your heart out? You deserve to be able to. As far as your crime, well, if you handle your business legitly, in time you will be able to move on from this past, and given the crime happened as a juvenile you will be able to wipe your record clean. No one needs to know about your past, unless you plan on being a terror as an adult. For now, you can't worry what others think, you need to get focused on you and better you! We hope you can stop punishing yourself. You're a good guy and a terrific friend to The Beat. We are honored you have us as an outlet, as you work on having patience with the world.

Helping Myself

I am sitting here watching the rain fall
 To the ground and it reminds me of all
 The tears I have shed from love that was
 Lost and loved ones and I'm wondering
 Will the love that was lost ever be found?
 Are the spirits of lost loved ones till around?
 When will they come down
 From those heavenly skies?
 At this time in my life,
 When I need a spirit guide to be by my side
 And guide me towards a more righteous path
 No smoking, no drinking, no selling my butt
 Just praise His name and listen to His word
 Don't ever trust a ninja who would stand on a curb
 I'm telling ya!
 I've been there
 All they sell is dreams and wolf tickets
 And as soon as they get mad
 You're...
 But don't get twisted
 You can find you're one in a million
 It may take some time
 But you will know when you get that feeling
 It'll make your heart flutter
 And your knees get weak
 He'll say, "Hello"
 But you can't even speak
 But be careful these are the ones
 You gotta watch out for
 You may think that they're perfect
 But sometimes they want more
 But don't be shy
 Go ahead and see what he's like
 Just make sure you got the lock on your heart tight
 Now, all this stuff I'm telling you
 I should be telling myself right?
 See, my problem
 I can help everybody else
 And can't help my own life.

-Ri-Ri, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Ri-Ri, helping ourselves is the hardest thing to do, for all of us. Everybody has advice for everybody else, but the real test is being able to take your own. You are an excellent writer. You are one in a million. You CAN change. You are beautiful. You are... whatever you want to be. Listen to yourself and follow your dreams.

People Miss Me

Where is the love? The love is your friends. Just because they don't write you in jail or call you, that doesn't mean they don't miss you. They still miss you and love you, even though you are in jail, because I'm in jail and peoples still miss me.

-Ketzales B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you're on the outs, do you write to your friends who are locked up? Do you friends give you good advice about staying out of juvenile hall? What makes them your friends?

**When I talk about the innocent,
 I don't mean the blond-hair
 blue-eyed cheerleader.
 I am talking about you guys.**

**Guilty By Association**

Graffiti decorations under a sky of dust
 Another wave of tension on top of broken trust
 The lessons that you taught me
 I learned were never true
 Never find myself in question
 They point the finger at me again
 Guilty by association
 You point the finger at me again

I wanna run away
 Never say good bye
 I wanna know the truth instead of wondering why?
 I wanna know the answer
 No more lies
 I wanna shut the door and open up my mind

Angry mobs and angry voices under a sky of dust
 Another wave of tension has more than filled me up
 I'm the talk of taking actions
 These words were never true
 Never find myself in question
 You point the finger at me again
 Guilty by association

I wanna run away
 Never say goodbye
 I want to know the truth instead of wondering why?
 I want to know the answers
 No more lies
 I want to shut the door and open up my mind.

-Noah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Noah, excellent piece. If you want to know all the answers, you must ask all the questions and be open to one's opinions to the questions.

Learning the Hard Way

Blacks killin' blacks over crack — and turfs. I don't see why my black Americans kill each other like this. Little kids dying over some stupid stuff! People don't realize that death is not a joke — there is no get-back.

Some of the reasons why I think youngstas do what they do, is because they don't know about their past history. They don't know what our ancestors did for us to be where we are today. I mean, I don't really know about my people's past history, but as I read and learn about it, I think about why I do wrong. Now I realize it's because I'd never listen to what my older siblings were trying to tell me. They always told me, "Watch who you hang out with."

I always thought that they were just bothering me — until I got into some shhh with one of my best friends. I never knew that I could go to jail till I actually ended up in jail. I kinda messed up; I had to learn the hard way. Then in 1999, one of my cousins got killed by one of his so-called best friends. I didn't know what the beef was over 'till now — it was all over some dope! That's why you can't trust no one, not even your so-called best friend.

-Young D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: A lot of our readers reach the point of understanding that they can trust no one in the dope-selling game. But they seldom take seriously the possibility that it's a life-or-death decision to stay in a game where you can trust no one, not even your so-called best friend. Yes, you're learning the hard way, but we are so proud of you — because you are learning. We hope you see clearly that you need to make friends out the dope game and that you need to quit a game that values money (fast money that disappears as fast as it comes) over human life — and, just as you say, there's no get-back from the grave. Camp is giving you a second chance. Make it work!

The Innocent

In this world built of sin, the innocent get killed 'cause they can't separate the fake from the real.

The news stations are filled with slaughters with no cause or meaning.

This world is filled with something so deceiving.

Freedom.

But when you think that even people who are not in jail are prisoners.

Their life could be taken by a gun or a knife, you can even take your own life.

This life could end tonight.

When I talk about the innocent,

I don't mean the blond-hair blue-eyed cheerleader.

I am talking about you guys.

-Myeisha, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very thoughtful piece. It seems there are two main points. One, that young people are innocent: We tend to agree. The youngsters who are considered the worst offenders, who have robbed and killed, we believe would probably not have done those things under more positive circumstances. Two, that we are not truly free because we could die at any moment: this could be argued at length, but it is certainly true that if you are constantly afraid for your life on the outs, you cannot feel completely free. In fact, some of you may feel safer inside, and that is a terrible thing. Thank you for thinking about these things so seriously and sharing them with all of us.



The Days That come

Days away, to follow the days that come,

Staring out the window, wittingly,
to cry my way until all is said and done.

People may come and other's may go
allowing life its dynamic mobility.

Others will age in a place of grace,
And the rest to sin city.

Days to come, to follow barbaric days a ways.

People seem different but exactly

The same hostility face to face.

Others slow down leaving yet others

To pick up their speed.

While some find the better things in life,

Others will live with selfishness and greed.

Days before remind you of the days of today.

From the same raffish things,

To the same as the weather in May.

Drowning in our own tears.

Followed by the days of today,

And best friends with our fears.

Days away, to follow the days that come.

Followed by some rainy days

To blue skies like the moonlit sun.

Days away and days to come.

-Lil' Jamar, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The lyrical lilt of your song without music flows like a mountain brook, sparkling quick, or sometimes like river broad and slow — but either way you go, you always make both feeling and beauty show through. It's just the natural-born poet in you.

RIP To My Baby Sister

I got a long life ahead of me. I hope to make the most of it. I have already left the game. I gave it up when my sister was killed. She died because of my actions.

I got involved with a confrontation with another family and both families started fighting. The opposing family found and killed my sister just because she was my sister. They cut her in pieces and sent me pictures of her. I left the game to be played by someone else. I won't play no more. RIP G-Baby

-Big brother, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We cannot express into words how sorry we are for your loss. We know that the guilt at times feels overwhelming but you have to understand that the person responsible for her death are the people that killed her, and you were not that person. You have learned a powerful lesson about the high price of the game. Many people let their anger and sadness fuel them to keep going but you are smarter than that and we are glad to hear that you are getting out. Stay strong and keep your head up.

When I talk about the
innocent,
I don't mean the blond-hair
blue-eyed cheerleader.
I am talking about you guys.

Nothing To Write

When I can't think of anything to write
I force words out of my pen and hope they're right
Like now, I don't know where this'll go
It might die now, but you'll never know
A throw away poem only exists to the poet
If it's a crumpled up masterpiece, only he would know it
To me, a poem just expresses how to feel
It doesn't have to rhyme, as long as it's real
But this, thou, I don't know exactly my view
It's exactly my feelings, spontaneous and confused
I can't wait 'til I get out and take a look around
It would suck if I get culture shock from my own town
I don't know what else to write right now
So I will slowly and purposely put my pen down

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Can you imagine all the masterpieces that must exist, that have been written by people as brilliant as Shakespeare, but because no one ever saw them, either because the author kept them to himself or because he could get no one to publish or produce them, if they were plays? It's a pity that we have no access to those genius writings? In a way, all of you in juvy who have had your work published in The Beat have already accomplished something many aspiring writers dream of—to see their work in print. So we hope everyone in juvy and you write your hearts out while you have the opportunity. It might show all of you what you're capable of, as far as being able to thinking and write goes, and change your lives.

To You

You see me over here and I see you over there
It frustrates me that you don't know how much I care
Since July, over six times you've come
And now I hear that you're on the run
It's not that I don't enjoy your company
I really do
But not if it's back in juvy
That's not cool
You're incredibly smart, and an amazing poet
You've got what it takes to do good, and I know it
I can't say your name, but you know who you are
The girl with eyes like midnight stars
Now here I am at the end of this poem
But please take my advice and stay at home

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: What a beautiful poem to write to an ol' friend. It does hurt when you realize a friend, now on the outs, is in trouble and on the run. Your advice and good wishes to her are so right on and very caring.

**I been quit the game a long time
ago, because I was hurting
too many people**

My Mom Taught Me Right

I think that most people that don't show love, its not their fault
— because some parents teach their kids to hate people!

Most people keep telling me that love is for cowards, but
I tell them that they are tripping — because they love their
moms and loving your mom fashow don't mean you're a
coward! Me, I love everybody, because my mom and my god
didn't bring me into this world to hate people! If I said I hated
someone in my mom's face, she will slap me silly!

-Roderick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: If we think there are better ways to teach love than slapping someone, we mean no disrespect to your mother — and we celebrate the fact that she got the message through to you (even though you said in your other piece this week that you used to talk about other people's moms and dads disrespectfully, which for sure isn't showing anyone love). Keep that love in your heart, 'cause it for sure takes more courage to stand up to these fools with love than walk and talk the hate that's poisoning our world today! It takes courage just to write like his in The Beat.

Wishing For You

When I used to fall asleep
So many months ago
I'd wish for happiness
For things to be a little bit better.
Though I didn't know it
I was wishing
And hoping
For you
My wish came true
You came into my life
With open arms
Gave my life meaning
Showed me
That when you have love in your heart
The world is a better place
When you have trust
And someone to trust in
Life's problems seem less serious
When you have someone to love
Someone to hold tight
Nights don't seem as cold
I learned that when you are given a chance
A chance to do something over
Take it
You were my second chance
And I blew it
Never again

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Fortunately, life can offer an infinite number of chances if you don't blow the ones you're given too severely. OK, you've made some serious mistakes. Isn't your challenge now to really scrutinize what went through your mind before and during those mistakes and learn from them? Let nature take its course and once you're free again, make better choices and see what happens.

Lydia

Loving you demands intimate activities
Leaving yesterday's dreams in awe
Like yellow daffodils in April
Like your devilishness in autumn

I don't know where you are right now
But I hope that you are doing well
I think about you all the time

-Scorpion, Marin

From The Beat: Lovely Spring poem! Does Lydia know where you are? Maybe she has you on her mind, too!

I Quit the Game

I been quit the game a long time ago, because I was
hurting too many people. It took me a long time to
realize that but its clear to me now.

When I was on the out, I used to rob people's
houses. And i would get into a lot of fights with people.
I used to talk about a lot of people's moms and dads,
but when they say something about my mom and dad
— I'd be ready to fight!

-Roderick, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Major props on getting clear in your thinking. You know when you write it down like this, especially that part about talk that leads to fights, it sounds crazy — but everyone at Camp somehow got to taught to act the same way! Just listen to all that trash talk up here, and all the useless fighting. We hope your clear thinking gets carried over into a new way of walking and talking — 'cause all these folks who think they got game are really game goofy!

¿Por Qué Yo?

Por qué? Aquí estoy, aquí estoy pero no entiendo por qué a mí. Los días pasan y llegan, pero nadie cambia. Van a salir y van a vivir, pero no saben a donde van a ir. Este lugar no va a cambiar el alma de ningún chico. Estoy seguro de esto. Todo es por el dinero. Aquí estoy, pero no entiendo por que a mí?

From The Beat: Te equivocas, hay muchos jovenes que han cambiado despues de estar encerrado. Hay otros que no, que siguen volviendo hasta que terminan en peor situación. ¿Cual vas a escoger tú? Para toda pregunta siempre hay una respuesta. Esta pregunta solo tú la puedes responder porque eres tú la que ha estado viviendola, quien la ha estado dirigiendo.

Why Me?

Why? Here I am, here I am, but I don't understand why me? The days come and go, but no one changes. They're going to get out and they're going to come, but they don't know where they are going to go. This place is not going to change the soul of any guy. I am sure of this. Everything is for the money. Here I am, but I don't understand why me?

-Ash, Marin

From The Beat: We're sorry, but we don't agree with you: There are many adolescents who have changed after being incarcerated. There are others who haven't and who keep coming back until they end up in worse situation. Which one are you going to choose? For every question, there's always an answer. Only you can answer this question because it's you who has been living your life and it's you who has been directing it, too.

If You're Coming To The Ranch, Be Yourself

I wanna say what's up with The Beat?" I'm coo' up here at the Ranch. I only got two weeks from today left here. I been here for one year and two months, and I'm really ready for some action out there, 'cause I'm especially sick of these young ones that ain't 'bout nothin' but being on that piesta, trying to be somethin' they ain't. My words of wisdom to people is: Be yourself.

If you comin' to the Ranch, be yo'self, and bring somethin' new fo' these followers to follow, 'cause you gone be the center of attention. Come here and stick to a game plan, something to accomplish and you'll be coo' if you stick to it 'til the end.

Make goals and execute them, otherwise you'll be taken as a joke.

I'm here to share some wisdom if they lookin' for it. Ain't no sugar coating nothing, 'cause this ain't no game.

-Jay LCRS, SF/YCG

From The Beat: You're on your way home at last, Jay Bandit, and you sound really positive about making in on the outs without reverting to whatever brought you down to the Ranch. What will be the temptations that will be the most difficult for you to confront and resist? Your homies? The cash? The drama of the streets? You sound like you've learned a lot and that juvy has not much more to teach you. Please keep yourself from any more mess—we never want to hear you're in a heavier, more dangerous place than the Ranch.

Trying To Wake Up

Waking up every day hoping that I'm dreaming

That four white walls and a brown ain't really what I'm seeing
Didn't think this was something in my life I was gonna go through
But now that I'm here I can see myself coming in an' out of those doors

Like my good side left and my dark side rose

Still hoping it's just a dream

Pinching myself trying to leave the scene

-Pinguino B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You can make this a dream if you chose to as long as you know that you are the only one that can wake yourself up. Once you do get your wake up call (and we're praying it's soon), remember the details of this dream — the feelings, the emotions, the pain you've caused yourself and those that love you — in order to prevent yourself from having this dream again.

Something In His Pocket

Something in his pocket.

So careful not to drop it.

Reluctant to risk it

but the devil in his head

who wrote the life he led said:

no risk, no reward.

And now he's a ward

because he took the risk

but there was no reward.

But now he's chosen to be bold

because his guardian angel

took control, and so far,

his life has been on a roll.

He's struggling no more

with what's on the other side –

taking life by the horns

and living with pride.

-Anibal, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Wow! You're getting better and better at the writing business. Keep it up. We enjoy your pieces, each and every week.

Not Knowing Why

In my mind is always crime.

Thinkin' about nickels and dimes,

not thinkin' the consequence was time.

Stayin' high all the time.

PO always trying to test.

Packin' but not a vest.

Not thinkin' that someday I could be put to rest.

Sweatin' 5-0, big load on my chest.

Not knowing why I do what I do.

Just the way I was raised, but it's cool.

So 'til the day I'm laying in peace

I'll just call life a reality check

and apologize to my family

for all the tears they've wept.

Congratulations to the streets,

for me they kept.

-Mack, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Sounds like you're lucky to have survived. We hope you'll spend some time figuring out exactly why you've done what you've done. Maybe you haven't asked the right questions. Examine every part of your life...the dark parts and the good parts. We all deserve to be happy, but it takes work. Are you prepared to work at it?

POW Prisoner Of War

Every President for the last forty years, every President has said we are fighting a "war on drugs." We have spent billions of dollars, lost thousands of lives, and lost hundreds of thousands of people every year to jail in this war. So if this really is a war, then I am a POW (prisoner of war.) I'm a POW fighting for the honorable cause of drug legalization. I and many others are POWs and I demand the respect the Geneva Code gives to all POWs. I am a soldier in America's longest war.

-Ash, Marin

From The Beat: If someone challenged your argument about the desirability of legalizing drugs, how would you defend it? In what way, would you say, do drugs make anyone's or your life better? How would you argue against the theory that drugs can mess with your mind and enhance your chances of becoming addicted to them? Please expand your essay. Good work.

My Little Guardian Angel

I believe in guardian angels. My little cousin is one. Sometimes when I feel down I talk to her and let her know that she will always be missed. She was young but so smart. So I could ask her a simple question, and she could give an answer.

She was only 11, but going on 20. She was so smart and that's why I loved her and always will. She will never be missed, because to me she never left. My guardian angel.

-Caution B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You just gave a fine example of how great an impact a special person can have on your life, no matter what age they are. We hope your "angel" motivates you to be a better person and a good role model for the younger people who you may have influence over. You have our sympathy for your loss.

Game Over

I think it's time for me to get out of the game because I realized that shhh ain't for me. Most of the time I ask myself what the hell am I doing out here. I mean come on, is this the life I want? I tell myself no, but I find myself back on the streets every day.

I don't sell drugs and I really don't bust no guns. Nor do I intend to shoot, or kill nobody. So why am I steady hanging with the wrong cats? I feel like I am throwing my life away. So I don't need to quit the game, I need to stop hanging with the wrong people. It's time for me to leave for good.

-Drew B4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Please don't give up on yourself in this battle that you are waging with yourself between what's right and what's wrong. At the same time, don't wait until it's too late, and you find yourself wishing that you had listened to the voice you know you should be listening to. We admire your honesty, but all the honesty in the world won't help if you fail to make that change.

Beisbol

When I get back, I'm going back to what I do best, to play baseball and run that game. I'm giving up that block life and going to square up and chose my baseball career. Being Puerto Rican, it's in my blood and culture, so I'm giving up that b-s quick hundred dollar life, and invest in something worth fighting for, not that block b-s.

And Yeah, I'm good at baseball, real good.

-Dboy-to-Bboy

From The Beat: We believe you're good — we can see it in the pride of these sentences, and even in the handle you chose for yourself. When you have your next big game be sure to give the Beat a shout out so we can come cheer you on!

They Filled The System With Us

Screw all that taxes that helped build the prisons
And all the crooked cops that helped the system
Because they filled the system with Blacks and ours
Make the white people think that we sick, like SARS

-Bitter, Marin

From The Beat: Since you know that some crooked cops and others have designed the system to keep Blacks and your people within it, can you do whatever you need to do to stay out of trouble and on the outs? Can any stupid stereotype anyone may have of your people just strengthen you to defy it and prove them 100% wrong? We hope so. What would it take for you to keep yourself free? Keep standing up and sharing your thoughts!

Oh Mighty Dollar

What it do, Beat? It's yo' boy, Neezy, back at it.

Today I'm a write about the money everybody say they gettin' in the streets. All these people sayin' they gettin' dough by sellin' dope, weed and whatever drug they can get their hands on. Ain't gotta know how. They say they, 'cause if they did, they would buy theirself a paid lawyer to help them beat the charges, but they don't, 'cause they don't understand that the money they gettin' isn't gonna last. They need to get a nine-to-five so they can stack they dough in a bank, ya dig?

-Neezy LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: What more can we say, accept we hope you put your words into action and be about getting that legit job and leaving the street life behind.

Love Myself

When you ain't got no one to love you
You feel bad — you got to love yourself
When your parents ain't doin' nothin' for you
And you got to do for yourself — it hurts
But at that point in time you got to love yourself
You got to keep your head up high
And don't let no one put you down
And make sure that you feel good about yourself
Then you know that you love yourself
Your parents can tell you that they love you
And keep you starvin' for two days
And put the money you got to eat with
And put it in the dope man's hand
They don't love you so you got to think in your head —
Man, I forgive you Mom
I forgive you Dad
But right now I got to love myself
'Cause you actin' like you can't love me
So what can I do? I'm not a magician
I can't make you love me
So for now on I got to love myself, do for myself
But when you was little you had someone to talk to
Someone to hug you and tell you gonna be somebody
But if you didn't have parents like that
You'll be thinkin' the same thing like:
Man, I got love myself!

-Young One B2, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It's a tragedy that we read too often when parents don't care for their children. We require drivers to get a license, fishers to get a license, and marrieds to get a license — but anyone can become a parent, whether they love their children or not! At the same time, Young One, we have to tell you that your advice to love yourself is true whether you are loved by others or not. Loving yourself is the essential first step to loving anyone or anything. So tell us, what do you love about yourself? How will your self-love help you when it's your time to be your child's parent?

I Feel Trapped

I feel trapped stuck in this
Place and its know way out
We be locked down in our rooms
All day and it's know why we can get out
We have to eat county food
We have to shower with each other
We have to use county soap that breaks your face out.
The deodorant has us stink all day.
the clothes don't always be clean well.
The cloths be smelling.
I wish there was a way I can just wake up one morning and all my problems are behind me.
I want to let all the problems go.

-John, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Be sure to use all these dislikes as a reason to stay out of jail because it only gets worst after the halls. Come on now thing about, is running the streets worth wearing the same under wear that the next person already wore years before you? Don't think so! This is not the life for anyone and that's why it would be your best bet to never put yourself in a situation that could get you back in hell on earth.

I Don't Want To Hurt My Mom Any More

It's time for me to get out of the game, 'cause if I get caught, I'm sent to placement an' that would hurt my mom, an' I don't want that any more. An' I don't wanna leave my best friend, Dean, who I consider my brother, alone, 'cause he's a young teen an' just starting messin' around with E, acid, an' coke, an' if I ain't around to check on him, he'll probably end up d, or not makin' no more money.

-Julio, Marin

From The Beat: It's great that you're considering how what you do affects your mom and friends. How has being in the game influenced you, bad or good? How do you deal with being locked up? What else can you do, that's legal, to earn some money, spend your time, hang with your friends? In order to convince your young friend Dean to get out of the game, will you have to leave that game yourself? If so, would you do it, for either his or your own sake?

The Life

The life that I live

Dope

Girls

Turf shhh

Guns

Killing

I stopped the game

When they killed Mikey

And his dad, Big Mike

I'm sad about that shhh

'Cause they died in the same place.

-Smoke, 150 Crew

From The Beat: RIP Big Mike and RIP Mikey. It's time to save yourself, Smoke. Peace to you.

Hands Down

Breathe in for luck

Breathe in so deep

This air is blessed you share with me

This night is wild

So calm and dull

These hearts, they pace from self-control

Your legs are smooth as they graze mind

We're doin' fine

We're doin' nothing at all

My hopes are so high that your kiss

Might kill me, so I won't let you kill me

So I die happy

My heart is yours to fill or burst

To speak or bury

Or wear as jewelry

Whichever you prefer

These words are harsh let's not get busted

Just sit and twine here undiscovered

Safe in here from all the stupid questions

Hey, did you get some?

Man, that is so dumb

Stay quiet, stay near, stay close, they

cannot hear

My hopes are so high that your kiss might
kill me

So won't you kill me

So I die happy?

My heart is yours to fill or burst

To break or bury or wear as jewelry

Whichever you prefer

Hands down this the best day I can ever
remember

Always remember the sound of stereo

The dim of the soft lights

The scent of your hair as it twirls in your

fingers

And the time on the clock

When realized it's so late

And all the time we spent together

And the street wet and the gat was locked

So I jumped it and I let you in

And you stood in the door with your hands

on my waist

And you kissed me like you meant it

And I knew that you meant in.

-Anonymous, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Awe... love. You need to step up and take some credit for this effort. What a love poem!

Waking Up

Wake up at home, prepare for a day that's gone be long

Step out in the light, prepare to be in the hood 'til it's night

Walking to my destination without a fright, look both ways not a police in
sight

Walk on the block give my patna dap, then list to the cars ride past slappin
slap, the day has started and I feel good

Looks like it's go be anotha' day in the hood

Hop in the car to see a sac,

Look behind me and I'm getting jacked

Wake up the next day and prepare for my day, oh I forgot I gotta listen to
what they say

Put on a pink shirt and blue jeans

Stand up straight and please don't lean

No one talk or give each other dap

Just stand up straight hands behind yo' back

I hope when I wake up again this'll be a dream

But fo' that to happen I have to give up the bad things.

-Lareesia, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Great piece! It's a story that many of the girls in your unit know, but you made it lyrical. Keep writing and telling your stories. You have a great style.

A Man With A Plan

Ever since I was a little kid I never really had a male figure in my life. Or I had uncles and older cousins but I saw them only at family parties and get-togethers. I had no choice but to do what I thought I had to do to be a man so I got individuals with the homies. As far as I knew my homies were teaching me everything I needed to know about being a man. I went to school on the regular but just because my mama and grandma made me. As soon as I got home I was out chilling with the older homies until the days end. Up until now I thought what I was doing was being a man.

But I was wrong. I was a 17-year old boy on the road to nothing with a baby on the way. Being in the hall made me realize that. My family was the only one here for me. The woman who raised me - no homies or OG's or any of the other people who were supposed to be my male figure didn't do shh to help me out. This was my eye opener - those who play it and did what they could to teach me the rules and regulations were teaching me everything except how to be a man.

Being a new father I've now realized what it takes to be a real man and why I have to leave the game alone because my actions and what I do now not only effect me but also my daughter and those closet to me who have showed me nothing but love. I'm not going to wait for tomorrow to get out because tomorrow may never come. I have to better my life by making the choices of leaving the game alone today. Its always going to be there and I know my true homies will understand the choices I've made because real recognizes real and they know what I have to do. I know that I'm leaving this game with what I've been taught and the experiences. I leave this game to better myself but never forget the struggle of the game.

-Lil' Hogg, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow - this piece was incredible because it came straight from the heart. It takes a real man to be that honest with himself and the rest of the world. Your sincerity and growth is reflected in these words. It's ironic that a lot of young man often complain about and feel scarred by the fact that their dad wasn't around, yet they end up repeating the same pattern with their own children. You are going to be different though. Too many people end up in the game looking for the things they aren't getting at home - acknowledgement, support (emotional and physical) and protection. The smart ones are able to see that the game and its families are not looking out for their best interest. The lucky ones have a real family that has stuck by them no matter what. We cannot tell you how great it is to hear young parent recognize that life is no longer just about them - you have to think about your child's needs as much as you do your own in order to give them a shot at the life they deserve.

Realization, Love, And Change

The feelings inside me are so immense
 It makes me go crazy and have no sense
 I know no one can see it
 But I can feel
 Just talking to counselors won't make it heal
 So what's the point?
 Then I turn to smokin' a joint
 But that's okay
 I'll try again
 Keep tryin' and tryin'
 'Till I finally win
 I'm fighting battles with my inner demons
 I wish it would stop
 I guess I could keep on dreamin'
 I hate when I take my anger and pain
 Out on other people
 It makes me feel bad and very evil
 But the thing is I have issues just like you
 If you think you don't you need to get a clue
 So I'm sorry for bein' a...
 I'm sorry for the games,
 But you know what they say
 "No pain, no game"
 Now I'm-a start a new topic on trust and love
 When me and my ninja get together
 We must fit like a glove
 But not too tight
 Then we'll probably fight
 The most important thing is trust
 Without that
 A relationship would be dust
 The best love is unconditional
 The type you get from ya' mom
 I wish I never put her through any worries
 Now she looks back
 And has tons of bad stories
 If I could go back
 I'd start all over
 Turn back the clock
 And dust off the dirt off my shoulders
 But we all know that can't happen
 I'm not the boss
 God's the captain
 I know he has a plan for me
 Cause if He didn't
 I'd be dead
 But, I keep wakin' up
 Lookin' at these four walls with dread
 All I want is to change
 That's true to my heart
 I hope when I start, I'll never end
 And the end will be a start.

-Lay-Lay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Lay-Lay, life's funny. Everything is somehow connected. When one thing ends, another begins. What lies in the future for Lay-Lay? Yesterday was an end - where will you start today?

For The Next Generation

When I get out of juvenile, I want to do something positive in my life. I want to finish high school and get a good job. I want people to see me as a leader. I want to do it for the young people growing up behind me.

-Samra B1, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire you for making a commitment to change — and especially to do it for those who look up to you and follow your example. What kind of job do you want to get after you finish school?

Too Much To Ask

It's the first time I've ever felt this lonely
 Wish someone could cure this pain
 It's funny when you think it's gonna work out
 Till you chose speed over me your so lame
 Thought you were cool until point
 Up until the point you didn't call me
 When you said you would finally figured out
 You're both the same
 Always comin' up with some kind of story
 Every time I try to make you laugh
 You're always feelin' sorry for yourself
 Every time I try to make you smile
 You can't
 You too tough
 You think you're loveless
 Is that too much that I'm askin' for
 Thought you'd come around when I ignored you
 Sort of thought you'd have the decency to change
 But Dad, I guess you didn't take that warnin'
 'Cause I'm not about to look at your face again
 I can't find where I am
 I'm layin' here alone in fear afraid of the dark
 None to claim alone again
 Can't you see that you lie to yourself?
 You can't see the world through a mirror
 It won't be too late
 When the smoke clears 'cause I am still here.

-Montez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Drugs ruin peoples' lives. Not only the ones abusing but everyone around them. Let your situation be a lesson to all - to stay away. What good has ever come from substance abuse?

I Can't Quit

I want to quit the game
 But I can't
 I don't live with my mom
 I got a kid
 I'm only 15
 I can't get a job
 So I sell rock's
 That's why I can't quit the game.

-Deo, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Were not going to lecture you about selling drugs, but here are a few things to think about: You a have a kid. Someone on this earth looks up to you. Do you want him/her selling drugs? Do you want your child to have a father that is locked up in jail? If something happens to you, who will take care of your child? Selling drugs may put bread in your child's mouth today, but what about tomorrow? You better come up with a better plan soon.

The Game Don't Quit, But I'm Out

I don't think it's never going to be a time to get out of the game. Some of us need to stay in the game. But all the people that is in the game and playing with it, they need to stop playing with the game.

Me, personally, I been got out of the game! Ain't shhh left in the game — so I think everybody should just understand that it is important to get a job! So peace out to all y'all. And fo' y'all that's coming up to Camp, just do yo' program like me. I only got two months left.

-Jamarr, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is very sad to think that there will always be some who, at least for a time, need to make money on the street in order to survive — but that doesn't mean they need to stay in the game. You say, personally, you're out! And that's what it takes — comes a time when a person awakes to the fact that there's nothing left in the game for them. Get that job! Props.

You (My Song)

She my baby...
 She have some pretty eyes with a sensitive face
 She my baby...
 I want my mama and daddy to meet her and have my baby
 She my baby...
 She my all I want her to be with me
 She my baby boo baby boo my baby boo

(Verse 1)

Mama told me everything that's fine ain't the finest and
 everything that shines ain't a diamond
 But you my diamond and I think you the finest
 Our love will bud, it all comes with timing
 Most females take yo' love with the blindness
 I really feel for you I'm not lying
 I like to see you smiling baby not crying
 Being with you I feel like am flying
 They be asking how do I love
 I know mama happy because you I love
 She smiling down on us from above
 I know you been mistreated
 And led in the wrong direction
 Ain't no second guessing
 I'm gon' buy a ring and pop the question

(Verse 2)

Baby stop crying let me dry your tears
 I'm yo' protection
 I block all of your fears.
 I hope you not crying over me
 Please baby don't worry
 You'll see
 We meant to be
 Don't worry
 I know how you feel
 Don't cry
 For you I'll kill

You don't have to worry
 Cause I want hurt you
 For you anything I'll do
 Please believe me
 My love is so true
 I need to love you what we creeping fo'?
 You ask me if I look at you different
 And I said, no
 All things you've done
 I didn't see it though
 I won't ever treat you like them other girls
 With you
 I want to bring another kid in the world

(Chorus)

You make me want to stop thuggin'
 It's you that I'm loving

(Verse 3)

It's you that I need, boo
 For you everything I'll do
 I don't need nobody long as I got you
 Baby don't worry boo
 You'll always have my heart
 For you a ninja's head would be torn apart
 Now that you have my heart
 Please don't play with it
 Love it
 Don't let it sit over me
 Don't have a fit
 I don't ignore you on purpose
 Your purpose is to be my wife and spend eternity.

-Anonymous, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Okay Anonymous, we get the point, and we are sure she does too. But if you are willing to do anything for her, like tearing apart heads for her, then are you willing to not fight someone for her? What about changing your life around? What about walking away from a fight. Would you be able to do that if it was necessary? How far could you sacrifice your pride for this love, to do the right thing? You are very sweet with your words, but when you say that someone means everything, how much would you really sacrifice for it? Is this love song just spittin' game, cliché after cliché? Or do you mean what you say? Hmm...

Learn From Past

One day me and my partna Chris and Chase drove over to this one girl's house 'cause she was having a party. Like eight or nine of our other partnas met us there and we were goin' dumb, drinking, smoking, you feel me, from about eight 'till very early in the morning.

Then some ninjas came and my homeboy K was freakin' with one of the dude's girls, plus he was drinking a little too much and tried to run up. So then that ninja and his homies told us to go out in the backyard and we wasn't trippin' so we went out and squared up with them and one of the punks brought out a .357 magnum and shot my patna Goofy in the neck and hit an artery. RIP Goofy.

After, everyone scattered from the shot, my partna already past. Ever since that night I quit bangin' and whenever a fight is about to happen I try and work it out man to man, and if it doesn't work then the ninja gets dipped.

I've learned a lot in life while bangin' and hustlin', and now I try to keep cool and stay out of trouble and not get caught up...

-Jake, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We are glad to hear that you stopped banging after this incident. It's a shame though that you had to loose one of your friends to come to this decision. What kinds of things have you learned while banging and hustling? We admire that you try to keep cool and stay out of trouble - it's a hard thing to do. If more people had as much strength courage as you to not get too caught up there would probably be a lot fewer homicides. The world needs more strong willed people such as yourself.

Get Out The Game

when you go to jail
 and realize it ain't for you
 it's time to get out the game
 when police know your 'hood name
 it's time to get out the game
 when other 'hood's ninjas
 got you in their aim
 it's time to get out the game
 so get out the game before it's too late
 and you get shot in the brain
 — forget the fame
 'cause when your sittin' in a cell
 you can only be ashamed
 so instead of hopping on the negative train
 be the one to ease the pain
 you need to understand
 that everyone's not the same
 you can turn your life around
 and finally get out the game

-Dopey, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've been coming with the real week after week, laying down the truth for anyone who seeks to see beyond the game and its tragic destiny which leads to hospital stays, early graves, jails and penitentiaries. Now if you believe what you teach and preach so poetically, you'll make the right choice when it's your time to go free.

Where's The Love

Q-Vo, Beat! This that vato, Lil' Mark from Hayward, much love and respect to all worthy. Anyways, to the topic: Where's the love? The love comes from the heart — and people need to show it! But some people don't and they're just full of hate.

Some people were born to hate and some people were born to love. People hate people who got stuff better than them and people who have a lot of money — better cars, better clothes, and a better house. There's people who rob and shoot because of jealousy, because the next man was ballin' and lookin' better than that man.

So stop hatin' and give people some love! You feel me? Alrato to all da vatos.

-Lil' Mark, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even if some were born to hate and some to love, those born to hate were also born to change, both to rise from poverty and to get that hate out of their brains. There's nothing more galling than the shame of poverty, and it can leave a stain of hate that has rage bursting out the gate from the start. While it's all really a matter of a change of heart, teasing or downing or clowning the poor is where so much of this all starts. Of course, sharing the wealth would lead to better mental health, ya know — a fair shake for all in the nation freedom calls home!

When The Sun Sets On Me

When will it be my time to get out of the game? I'll be out the day my light goes out and the sun sets on me for the last time. That's the day I'll get out of the game. I'll run and hold down my set until I feel like it's time to make that change.

But when I make a change, I'll still be in the game. Because the game comes in all different ways. Like, right now, I'm in the game — I'm in the game of the system! And the game of girls, fast money, and postin' on the block wit' my team. So now, the day I will get out of the game is that day ninjas come through wit a 'mac to lay me down.

Or maybe I will change when I get my "L" — yeah, if I live to see that day, I'll change my life. But even after I change, I'll still be in the game 'cause I'll still be in the game of makin my money. Like I said, the game comes in different shapes and forms! Whether it's going legit' or the way I been making my money, I'm going to be in this game until my sun sets.

-Baby Boi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're glad you say you'll quit the street hustle when you get your driver's license, as you say, if you live that long. But now, that day shouldn't be so far away, so why risk dying before you see that day? We like the idea of going legit is changing your game. All those folks who say the word "quit" isn't in their vocabulary need to change their game and go legit. Serious business, change your game right away — and get that (D)I, okay?

The Game Is Over For Now

Well I don't think I could quit hustling, because that's what I do. Selling dope is my job. It doesn't mean that I can't get a legitimate job though.

The game is to played based on how you play it. You got to watch the game, because game might play you. This generation of young folks, we ain't listening. That's why half of the youngstas I grew up with are locked up or dead. But it ain't are fault. This all we know! We just act like this and look like this. I grew up in a wild hood, so I had to adapt to the jungle. That's why I say, "If you a beast, stay a beast. If you not, then get out the game as fast as you can and don't look back!"

It ain't really nothing in the game no more except murder, robbing, and stealing. I can't be going out though, 'cause it ain't in my bloodline, you know? So keep you mind right, 'cause it always somebody who don't care and ready to take your life. Give me a hundred racks, and you will never here from me! But the moral of the story is: If you soft, don't get into this, 'cause it not for you. But if this your life style, then live it and keep it lit — keep it thuggin'.

-Lil' Jonah, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You said that half of the youngstas you grew up with are locked up or dead, and that's not just the soft ones, right? Haven't you noticed that "beasts" end up in "cages" or hunted down in a jungle of their own making? The truth is that it's the hard ones that need to get out the game first, 'cause their fate is coming fastest and is the worst. Someone who's so-called "soft" will maybe have the sense to keep low. All that fame in the game, miscalled "respect" — just means you're the next to go. We don't blame you for how you grew up, but no one else but you can save you from dying young or living forever locked up.

How To Give It Up

Just the streets and me
G's and mills is what I'm trying to see
But when you born in it
How to give it up
Unless you scared to bust
I've gotten jumped
I've jumped ninjas
I gotten shot at
How can a ninja quit the game?
Unless you wasn't born in it
And you live somewhere out of the town
Then I could see how you can quit
But me and my generation
It's all about loyalty
But it's something called
Being legit.

-St. Lewy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: St. Lewy, you bring up a really good point — when you are born in it, how can you get out of it? We don't have the answer to that question, but when you think about it, chances are, the game will get you killed. So, what other options do you have? If it's about survival — are your chances of staying alive better or worse, out of the Game? What would you have to do?

Quit Before You Get In

Man, to me the time to quit the Game is before you get in. Because as easy as it is to get in, the harder it is to get out. I wish I would have learned that.

The thing is, you get in the Game, start making money, getting clothes, the grill, the cars, and the girls. You start smoking with people and drinking bottles and that's having fun to a youngsta, but you don't depend on doing that you're whole life. Even if you know that the lifestyle is so fun and you got used to it, you don't let it go.

The game doesn't turn out that way all the time. Some people ain't as good at grinding then others then you start losing money very fast. Because you don't got customers, that means you got a whole lot of drugs sitting around. Then you start to use them. Then you go from the sale to the customer. Sometimes people get in the game and are too good, make too much money, too fast and there's always gon' be haters and they will take you out.

From what I notice, the only people that make it out the game is the one who never got in it. And the one's that got out in time are in jail that's bad to be in jail but it better then being dead.

-Casper, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Casper, it's true — not getting in the Game in the first place is the easiest way to not be in it. But, when you are in the Game, are you stuck? Is jail or dead the only way out? If people are willing to risk there life in the Game, why is it so hard for people to risk their life to get out of the Game? The Game is hard work, and it will take you nowhere fast. Why not put all that time and energy into something that help you. Where will you be in 10 years?

Hate

What's up, Beat? It's Big Vic coming out maximum security unit in this 150 Hall. First I'd like to say que onda (what's up) to all in here and to stay up. Now, to the topic — it's about love and hate.

Love and hate are big words. They are also closely related. I think the reason people hate on other folks is for two reasons. One is that they are just jealous. The other is that it's simply easier to hate than to show love: love is also hard to show because you need more emotions and actually need it in your heart to show it. You need more effort to show it. Like some folks in here be getting mad 'cause I'm a unit worker, but they just jealous 'cause they ain't. Well, that's just a couple lines I dropped for The Beat. Stay up all.

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Jealousy is definitely an inner demon that devours love, the ability to feel or show love. And as you say, even without jealousy, it takes a greater effort to nurture the love in our hearts — for love demands a certain vulnerability, an openness to others. And in places like this, kindness does indeed get taken for weakness far too often. Perhaps the main effort then is overcoming fear, especially in a place that is made of fear, by fear, for fear. And we all know that fear breeds hate.

If You Really Knew Me

If you really knew me,
You would know I hide behind a fake smile everyday.
If you really knew me,
You would know, I want somebody to say,
"JT, it will be okay."
If you really knew me,
You would know the pain I feel inside.
If you really knew me,
You would know I wanna tuck my daughter in every night
If you really knew me,
You would know I wanna get the hell outta Oakland.
If you really knew me,
You would know I wanna change my life and I'm not jokin'
— if you really knew me!

-Lil' Jt, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Readers of The Beat have gotten to know you over the time you've been filling our pages with your insight, pain, goals and desires, and we know every word you write here is true. Just don't make the mistake of trying to change halfway, 'cause the half chained to past mistakes will pull you down like an anchor in a bottomless lake. Give your new life all you've got, both for your own and for your daughter's sake!

Ghosts Are Real!

Yes, I do believe in ghosts. Yeah, I've felt the pressure of a ghost. Yes, I have seen a ghost, and my brother saw one, too. Especially in the Philippines, we both have seen ghosts. And I've seen some ghosts where I live right now, a couple of times!

One time my brother was on the phone, lying down on the couch. He said he felt like someone was next to him, and so he looked at the other couch and saw a little kid looking back at him. And another time, me and my homeboy was drinking, and the sliding door opened all by itself — I wasn't drunk or anything.

Ghosts are real! But no, I don't get scared when I see ghosts, 'cause they can't do nothing to you. They're just spirits trying to scare you; so don't believe all that stuff in movies!

-J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Hey, thanks for sharing you ghost stories with us, and especially for letting us know that ghosts can't hurt anyone. Now we've heard it from someone who's been there! Why do you think ghosts appear more often in the Philippines than here?

The Morning In 150 Hall, Man

What's up, Beat? What it do? After 2 o'clock, it's ya boy Reese to tell you what it do! My day went like this: I was dreamin' away early in the morning when I was rudely awakened by staff. He says, "Seven minutes to wash up! You late! You're eatin' breakfast in your room."

I say, "Wait a minute 'G'!" I sit up to gather my thoughts. Then I jump to my feet ready to take a leak. I make my way to the toilet bowl. I let my water hose out and start pushin'. About a minute into my session, I hear staff say, "Two minutes left." So I finished up and headed to my wash up bag. I throw some Crest on my brush and start scrubbing my teeth, trying to get that tarter taste off my tongue, when I hear staff say, "Thirty seconds left." I say, "Oowee! Don't talk to me!" I throw my bag in the box, hop down the hall and shut my door.

Ten minutes past time for breakfast: "Gentlemen, you have fifteen minutes to eat this meal. Who wants to bless the food?" Brother Scotty-to-hottey steers to the plate and says our prayers. We sit down and start munching away. Five minutes into it: "Gentlemen, you have five minutes left." I hear Dayday say, "Man, I need another hot cake!" My boy C-nut pops a joke. We laugh. Then I say something, and staff says, "You don't make no sense. Don't talk me." I say, "All right," and jump up throw the rest of my food away.

I take a seat for Professor Bob's class. By time he comes, I need to take a sit. I ask Bob, "Can I go to the bathroom?" He says, "Yes, but don't take a sit for my whole class." I say, "All right," with my fingers crossed! After I get done, I go straight to my room for some dreams. I sleep through the whole 7 to 3 shift. When 4 to 11 hits the scene, it's a different story. I got staff on my case for nothing!

-Reese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your depiction of the hurry-up morning routine in your unit is well-written and gives us a pretty good picture of how it routinely goes. Overall, it's a pretty good slice-of-life narrative of a day in the Hall. But now, the way you slick yourself out of school for the day, doesn't fill us with confidence that your assertion that staff gets on you for nothing, is accurate, since it appears that you try to get away with whatever you can get away with, you feel?

I'm Tired

I'm tired of staff telling me what to do.
Say "Do this" without a please or thank you.
I'm tired of these broads trying to act hard.
They act so good they deserve an award.
I'm tired of this food.
It tastes like shhhh it ain't no good.
I'm tired of pink and blue and wearing other broad's underwear
That shhhh ain't coo'.
I'm tired of being here I want to go home.
I'm tired of being in this box all alone
I'm tired of waiting for the months to pass by.
I want to smoke and get as high as the sky
I'm tired of be the b-s I go through everyday
My only relief is that I'm still in the Bay.

-Bianca, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've been there long enough. It's not surprising that you're sick of it. But that's sort of the point of jail — to punish you. You already have two strikes though, and the first thing you plan to do when you get out is get high. Have you ever thought about what would happen if you got caught that first time and then just thrown back in, maybe sent to CYA. Is it worth it for a high? You all say you won't make the same mistake twice, but so many of you end right back in the seat you're saying it from.

The Beat Within: Where The Love At Mayne?

Yeah, I'm feelin' this topic dis week, mayne! I'm feeling that thang 'bout where is the love? Ninjas need to stop hatin' and jus' get along.

I think to be a man, you need to stop worrying 'bout yo'self. Feel me, pimp? I swear people be talking 'bout they sick of seein' folks get busted, but I'll tell you, the longer ninjas keep hatin', the longer ninjas is gonna be dying. It jus' like what I be thinking about people funk' at camp — what's the need fo' dat? We all in this shhh together!

So ninjas jus' need to grow up and get along, so they can move on to a betta life instead of worrying 'bout dudes! Man, worry 'bout a female or something else, but increase the peace and stop hatin' on a playa!

-Big Chris, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We couldn't agree more about the funk' at Camp and the seeds of hate sown in the street, because even if words of hate most times don't amount to a hill of beans — they also perpetuate that state of mind that does get a young man (woman or child sometimes) killed! So does going dumb, especially if you're doing it with a gun — don't be the next one.

Now To Quit The Game

My time to quit the game has come now. This so-called game doesn't bring nothing but pain — hurting others as well as your own self and family!

Like when we're incarcerated for some reason, that's when we make so many promises to God. Then, once we get out and go back to the same place, we came from we forget about the promises we made to our Lord and go back to doing the same thing we did before.

Me, I thank God for having incarcerated me. Why? Well, because I gained understanding from the word of God (the Bible). And it made me realize that what I was into while out on the streets, wasn't right. I always wanted to see my little brothers succeed, but how was that going to be possible when I was the one setting the bad example for them. Like all youngsters, they do as they see, not as they're told!

So now I promise the Lord I will set that good example. And I thank Him for every change He has made in my life. I only ask Him to keep working with my heart and the hearts of others, to guide us in the righteous path.

-Ivan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Major props, Ivan, on your awakening to a higher calling than the street life! But just as you say, it's easy to make promises when you get locked up and hard to keep the spirit alive in your heart after your release. Now here's the deal, at Camp you go home weekends, unless you get too many write-ups during the week — and you can practice your resolve in the real world. Most of your peers, alas, will weekly sink deeper into their old habits. Be the exception and set that good example for you little brothers, starting now!

A Letter To My Unborn

'sup little one, how you doing
hope when you are grown
you wouldn't be screwing
or losing a part of your life
understand that your mom is my wife
don't ever disrespect your mother
if you are a boy then i know
you will be a good brother
this is a letter to you, my unborn
realize that life is full of thorns
it might be rough for us to live
but you have to understand
the things your dad did
i'm trying to do my best
as soon as i'm free from this test
it must hurt to know
that your dad was a gangsta
from the toes to the chest
but notice that he was
raised in oakland
and guess what
soon as you have a soul
everyone on this earth will know
your beautiful face for me to show
light white beautiful skin will glow
just remember that your dad
wrote you this letter
and you know i'm also praying
for your mom to get better

-Viet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: He or she just might understand that you couldn't help being raised how you were raised, 'cause we don't get to pick our families or even the place we grow up. But it won't be much more than an excuse for his or her self-abuse traveling down the same road as you, unless you can break away from what you were doing yesterday so you can raise your child up in a new way, better than what you knew in your younger days. Okay? The love is strong, but be there to show right from wrong.

Ghosts, Reincarnated Spirits And Angels

I do not believe that there are such things as ghosts in this world. I think this because they would be useless spirits just wondering around unable to do anything. Some religions believe in reincarnation and it has happened to some people.

There was a woman that died and an hour or even earlier she came back to life without the help of doctors. I think this miracle will happen if God wanted to give a certain person another chance or He wanted for him to be away.

Angels are something that I truly believe in because I believe in God and in the words of the Bible. If it says in the Bible so then it must be true. Some of these superstitions people believe in.

-Vp, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You put forth some pretty interesting ideas in this piece. When you talk about ghosts, you make them sound so sad and lost. A lot of people believe that ghosts are wandering spirits who have unfinished business here on earth and they can't continue on to heaven or hell until this business is taken care of. Reincarnation is when a person dies and comes back in a different body or as a different species. People who are considered dead and come back to life are miracles of sorts. We too like the idea of angels — it's comforting to believe there is someone who is always looking out for you. All of these things are questions we ask ourselves because the answers tell us a lot about who we are and the kind of life we want to lead while we are on this earth.

Haters Don't Even Know What Love Is

People say they aren't haters but once they see somebody else with more than them or the same as them or with someone who love's them, the haterism comes out.

We see so little love because most people don't really know what love is and are scared to learn what it is because they are afraid of what people are going to think about them. Instead of saying forget what everybody else thinks and learn to love and teach love to other people.

-Loved One, 15 OCrew

From The Beat: Oftentimes what people are most insecure about is the thing that hate on the most — be it love or clothes — because they are jealous. So you really tapped into something when you point out that people who are down on love don't really know what it is or how it feels. You only get one life so if you spend your time worried about what everyone else thinks you are going to lose a lot of valuable time worrying about nothing. As long as you can live with yourself and be proud of who you are then what else can you ask for?

What Game?

If there is a game, it is going back and forth to the Hall that's all it's about. You get broke, need some money and you do your thang and come right back. I've been here about eight times playin' that game and in all games you either quit, lose or die that's how all games are.

You might win sometimes or take it another level, but the game will get old. All the time you waste going back and forth to jail you can't get back. Like when I go to sleep at night, I hate the fact I feel like my life is going down like the Twin Towers.

Playin' the game so much, it's about to send me to the Y! That ain't no game it's realer then a game now that's why I'm like, what game? The game is shady, it don't show you love.

-Sunny D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sunny D, powerful words. How can others wise up before they are put in the same situation that you are in? There are no winners in this game - only people NOT playing it. Is there an alternative to make money, for those out on the streets?

Not The Same

I come from a little city in the East Bay known as Newark. Most people say, where? But no matter what, that's my hood. Whether it's on "the map" or not. But Newark ain't been the same since February 22, 2005 when some cowards took out a homie. Always seeing him on a bike, which was always stolen (haha) either ridin' solo or someone on peds, if not someone else on a bike.

No matter what you always had a smile on your face, asking if we needed it. That's what your known for. But see it ain't like that no more and it's hard to realize that you've been gone for a year. But then it hits 'cause it ain't been the same. We love you and miss you Johnny. Keep watchin' over everyone.

-Angelica, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard for us to know what to say to youngsters that have lost so many dear friends. Most people don't lose so many friends in their whole lives, let alone by the time they're 18. We're sorry for your loss, and we hope that Johnny does look down and guides you to do the right thing. Think about what he would want you to do (from up above) the next time you have questions or doubts about something.

The Love Is Everywhere

The love is everywhere

The love is in my hometown

The love is in that peacemaker I hold

The love is in my family's heart

The love is in my heart

The love is in the fight the strength, the soul, the mind, and also the body.

The love is here.

The love is in the game.

The love is in the church.

The love is in the present, past and future.

The love is in your enemies

The love is in the graveyards

The love is in the papers.

The love is in the inside

The love is on the outside

The love is in the flesh

The love is in you and me

The love is in your mom

The love is everywhere you find it to be

The love is in the kids.

-Kip Boy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This poem reads like a song, a song about what the world could be if we could quit the hating and learn to treat each other with respect and - well, you said it: Love. Thanks for sharing this vision with The Beat.

What's Happening At Home Right Now

This yo' boy Young Chuckie, wonderin' how ya' doing nowadays, I well I'm doin' my time in this system, and asking myself where's love in my life, well the one love that I know I have 100 percent is at home.

What time is it? 7:25pm, and at home right now she's making dinner for my pops and my two lil sisters. Boy I wish I was home eating my mom's dinner -- some enchiladas. Man I miss those plates of my Mexican food my mom use to make for me, but instead I'm eating some nasty ass country food, I don't even know what they put on it!

My second love is my baby mama, she's four month pregnant on April 27th, she'll be five months. Hope I get out by eight months, and continue my life and give my child a better life than the one I had.

Bye Beat Within, my box is calling me.

-Chuckie, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a terrific slice of your at-home life, and also a good reminder for you to keep of what it's worth changing for. You've got this baby on the way, a girl you love, a family that loves you, and oh the sweet smell of home cooked food. Do you think all these things will help you find the strength to do what needs to be done and break free of the Cycle of Death?

Ghosts Are Myth

To me ghosts are a myth. It's a way for people to keep holding on to relatives so they don't have to let go of them. Or cause they want' to hide their feelings. Cause some people have a hard time forgetting relatives (especially ones they grown attached to each other and friends and boyfriends/husbands.

Spirits is something that I believe in. cause that is what your body thrives on. That's what brings to your destiny (heaven or hell.) your spirit is something that no one can burn or bury or trap in anything.

Angels are the messengers of God. They call upon your spirit when you're gone so I don't have much to say cause I'm not dead. That is that. See ya

-Marina, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Interesting. But what about people that say they've seen ghosts that aren't related to them? Most ghost stories are about that. Do you think they're just superstitious? We do like the idea that a spirit is something that cannot be contained. But we would prefer to think that everyone goes to a better place after they die, not a more terrible place. After all, if you go to hell for killing someone, that means all the youngsters who grew up in terrible situations, felt they had to carry a gun to protect themselves and killed someone, would go to hell. But meanwhile, if they had been born with more money, or to better parents, etc. they might not have done what they did and might not go to hell.

Out of Here and Out the Game

When I get out of here is when I'm'a stop the game. When I get out, I'm try to get my job back, get into school, get my GED.

The game ain't gon' do nothing for you but get you in jail or killed. The game on the street is just like a video game — it's gon' end sooner or later.

'Cause when I get older, I want to have a family, my own house, and a good job — or my own business and live without worrying! I'm'a have a kid when I'm around eighteen or nineteen.

-Snacks, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We urge you to wait on having a child till you have finished school and have, not that entry level job but that next job a step up. Also you want to be so stable in living the right life that you don't jeopardize your child's future because you're not quite solid in your new life yet. Yeah, that's what we mean by keep it solid, living that life you describe here!

Jonny Tsunami

There once was a boy named Jonny Tsunami who came from Hawaii to the Bay Area. Jonny was a criminal and the police knew it. So one day Jonny had just left his house and started walking down the street, and 5.0 blurped him and he ran as fast as he could to the nearest fence and leaped over it into the back yard. Next thing he knows he's staring into the face of an angry pit-bull. So he jumped back over the fence and the police grabbed him and dipped him on the concrete and stomped him out.

They picked him up and said stop resisting and dropped him again, when Jonny brought it up in court, the Judge waved him off and said it ain't my problem. Jonny was beat for no reason and there was nothing done about it -- and that's the moral of the story.

This is a fictional story, but it happens every day.

-Rae, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's good to see that your pen is just as smart on telling stories as it is to drawing pictures. As a matter of fact, next time around you should illustrate on of your own stories. Maybe the continuing adventures of Jonny Tsunami?

Leaving My Unit

Today, April 4, is my last day here in this unit. I know you don't usually hear this, but it was ok being back at the hall. Some girls come and just cry, and complain, but I know that what I did was wrong. So, now I'm payin', and back in the hall. Don't get me wrong, I had my days when I'd cry and say the usual "I wanna go home," but not really no complaining.

Now, that I'm leaving the hall, I've decided that although it will be hard, I'm ready to do a serious change. I'm going to do my program, and work hard for my, high school diploma. I'm really determined to do right. I'm gonna miss the Hall. When I leave I'm really gonna miss a lot of people like my girl Bianca. She's always cool, talkative, and caring. Not to mention she cried when I told her I was leaving. Damn I'm gonna miss her. But Binks, don't let them hoes get to you, handle your sand let them talk. Do your program and don't fight.

Anyway, it was nice visiting the familia, but as you all know it's time for me to go, and handle mines.

Before I leave I will proudly scratch my named off the "Top Citizen list." I was nice being out my room all the time and working. I'm going to miss Mrs. Anafield and Mrs. Witt when they work together. They're fun and funny. Thank you guys for giving extras and being helpful and supportive. I'm going to miss you guys very much.

And not to mention Mrs. Theus and Belton. Mrs. Theus thank you for hearing me out and letting me cry my heart out to you, you are very supportive, thank you. I'm gonna miss you. And Mrs. Belton oh, no. now, she's funny, crazy and nice, 'till you make her mad. And I just wanna get one straight Mrs. Belton I ain't no midget. I'm just short. I'm going to miss you too as well as the other staff. Thank you all and I wish you the best. Bye Bianca, Anatfield, Witt, Theus, Belton.

-Peña, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a rare girl that says she's glad she's in the hall. Easier to say on the eve of your departure. But we hope you will stick to your conviction to do better and finish your program and we wish you all the luck in the world.

Love

Love is something that is often used in the wrong way.
The word love is thrown around like a basketball on the court.
Just because he says the words I love you;
doesn't mean he really does
nowadays when you say I love you to a guy,
9 times out of 10 you really mean it
but when a guy says it, a few times out of ten he really means it.
But most of the time he's just saying it
because he extremely infatuated
or is just trying to get into your pants!
But when he really truly means it
you will feel an overwhelming feeling of joy,
happiness, excitement and out of breath and you will truly know
you are loved and that's the best feeling you could have,
hopeful everyone will have the chance to experience
that wonderful feeling
of knowing that you are truly and honestly loved and cared for!
And that the best feeling in the world.

-Soraya, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That's a very specific calculation, but perhaps you're right. One thing you are definitely right about is knowing when someone really means it. If someone tells you they love you and they don't mean it, you can tell right away, because it seems fake. Always listen to your intuition in these cases.

What Is A True Friend?

What is a true friend? It is my mom, because she is always there for me. In sun or rain, she love me. But if anything happens to her, I don't know what to do about it. I might go crazy, because, you know, I love her with my life. When I am away from my mom, I do not know how to act. When I am around my mom, I do what I have to do, like go to school and do my homework, and clean up the home. A true friend is my mom for being there for me and teaching me to be a man. That is a true friend.

-Lil' Lone LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You're so lucky to have such a loving mom. How does your being locked away from her for so long, affect your relationship? Now that you're on your own to a degree at the Ranch, how do you act, without your mom?

My Angels

So many times, my life coulda been over
Coulda been six feet deep, guess I was tuckin' a clover
Or maybe I just had a little Angel on my shoulder
Even though we ain't together,
My angel's both of my brothas
Long as I got they back and they know what I love them they gon'
be watchin' my life and I ain't relyin' on bustas
Holdin' the gun steady tokin' and chokin'
The end of tha barrels' smokin'
Felt so bad, we busted each others' heads wide open
But they know it
I love 'em way mo' than my homies
I'll always have they black and they watchin' over me for' me
October 3rd, March 17th, the most important days of my life
I be prayin' and hopin' God watch over them every night
If they follow me they ain't livin' they lives right
Anybody messin' wit' 'em I'm a hang ya
'Cause they both parts of my heart so I gotta be their saviours
Yeah they younger but my brotha's my guardian angels
God bless Josh and Lil' Charles

-Buddamilk, 150 Crew

From The Beat: So we put out the challenge (Can you rhyme about something real) and sure enough you did, giving us a brilliant and heartfelt shout out to your brothers. Now we only wish you could find a way to help each other UP out of the grimy street life...because as you know, all that 'steady tokin', chokin' and barrel's smokin' doesn't bring any of you what you need. Instead it separates you (lockdown) and puts you in danger. You say it yourself, you don't want them to follow you in the direction you've headed. But if you switched directions and got your life right, they'd follow you in that direction too, wouldn't they?

When Will It Be Your Time To Quit The Game

When will it be my time to quit the game? It will be my time to quit the day I get out this shhh hole I'm tired of being in hurt I'm ready to change my life around and start a whole new one. I'm ready to start going back to school and stay at home with my mom and help her out with my baby sister and be a smart and good person. That's why I'm ready to quit the game.

I feel that the game then changed my life a whole lot, I been in this game for about three years and I'm tired of doing the things that I do, I would say what I do, but it's very personal.

Anyways, I feel that I should say to the people that's not in the game that you should think twice 'bout what you're getting yourself into 'cause there are a lot of consequences in whatever you get into.

It don't matter if you on the block selling drugs or on a street corner selling your body, there still are consequences either way you try to be in the game. First things first, if your selling your body out there you may get killed or into fights with the people who pick you up, or if you selling drugs you can also get killed or in to fights also and both ways it go you go to jail and you gone do your time fo' your crime, so like I said, be careful and make a right. Think about getting yo' self out the game! And not in the game....

-Shay Shay, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You're are right that it's dangerous being out there no matter what. But we think that prostitution on the street is one of the most dangerous jobs in the world, more dangerous than selling drugs or being a soldier in a war. For all the young women selling themselves on the street, we beg you to reach out for some help. It's hard to know where to turn, but there are services that can help you. For example SAGE (Standing Against Global Exploitation) helps young women get off the streets. They can be reached at 1-415-905-5050.

Serious Charges

I think my time to quit the game I'm playing started since I came in here -- because the game I'm playing got me in here on some serious charges. I was being stupid since I was young, I started running around the streets using drugs with weapons. I came to Juvenile Hall when I was a young teen, I never spent serious time locked up but I think now it's gon' be a long long time before I see the streets again. I wish I could start my life over.

I should've listened when my mom and dad told me to go to school, but no, I thought I was grown and I wanted to do what I wanted to do when I wanted to do it. But I guess it's time for me to learn my lesson. I just hope God hears my prayers and gives me one more chance, because I wasn't made for these institutions. I don't like being locked up, now I'm gon' miss my little girl Mykhya growin' up, it feels messed up being locked up, especially when you got people out there that loves and cares about you. To all of you, out there stay out of this shhh.

Quit the game ya playing now because it could, get a lot worse than what you think.

-Lil' D, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Sounds like this has been a serious wakeup call for you. How long is your max time? Remember that no matter what happens, the most important thing is not to give up hope, or lose sight of the precious things you have to return to. Unlike a lot of people that get locked up, you have something worth turning around for: Your baby girl.

Spirits In The Night

I do not believe in ghosts, but I do believe in spirits and reincarnation. Because when I was twelve I had a very weird experience. I was in my living room on the couch, the whole house was dark except for the light coming from the TV, then I notice a blue sort of neon looking light coming from the kitchen. It really did startle me because I was home alone and my mom wasn't due home for another few hours. So naturally I get up to go see what it was, but when I get there I notice that the creepy light now looked like it was coming from my room upstairs, and I can see it reflecting from a wall in the hallway, so not thinking much of it I climb the stairs and enter my room more determined than before to find what the hell that light was. Then I began wondering if someone was playing with my head but I still wanted to know what it was. But as I got closer to my room I felt myself starting to get kind of scared, when I finally entered I round a little bitty dead bird on my window sill.

-Caked Apple, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Interesting distinction between ghosts and spirits. Is one supposed to be scary and the other just an energy force? Do you think there are forces all around us that we can't understand, but once in a while we catch a glimpse, like you did with the blue light and the baby bird?

'69 Chevelle

If I could take a car of my choice and make it hella cool, I would start by picking out a 1969 Chevelle. Once I got the car I would paint it black with cherry colored pin stripes. Then I would head on over to a rim shop and get me some 22's for the back tires and get some dubs for the front.

After picking out some cool ass rims I would start to customize the interior. For the dashboard I would have that black with some cool colorful designs, and same with the seats. All my gauges and objects that light up would have a cool bright glow.

I would have the biggest subs that money could buy in my trunk so I could slap that Bay Area shhh.

On the back of the front seats their would be 16" inch plasma TV's with game systems hooked up.

-Jake, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Now that's a cold piece of work. We see that you not playing at all. You trying to shut down everything in traffic and we wish you the best of luck at the car shows. (Smiles...)

Ghosts? Spirits? Angels?

I have actually felt the presence of a ghost at my house. When I was about nine or ten years old I moved back to Hayward.

Well, it was about one or two a-m and I couldn't go to sleep, so I got up and went to the kitchen to get some juice I heard something in my room. I was scared to go back so I kicked it in the living room.

Around three/four am I was tired and thought that whatever was there it was gone. So I got up and walked to my room when I got there I slowly opened the door to my room and felt a cold chill run down my spine. Then quickly ran into my bed but I felt something by me. The heater and light were both on and out of no where a cold wind hit the left side of my cheek.

Three weeks later the owner of the house came and I made a playful comment about her having dead people in her house. She busted out crying and my mom explained to me that her daughter had passed away in the room I was in.

A week later I moved rooms. It was very strange to me when my grandmother passed away in the same room and date as the lil' girl.

I'm Guatemalan originally from here but I often went there and out there I practiced a lot of white, red, and a lil' bit of black magic witchcraft. So I would call on the spirits of the dead evil and good.

I know right about now y'all thinking oh shhh this girl is crazy but I'm not.

And angels yes. To me angels and stars are people that have passed away. Angels are those who God allowed into his gate and shooting stars are those who were the fallen soldiers.

-Bianca, 150 Crew

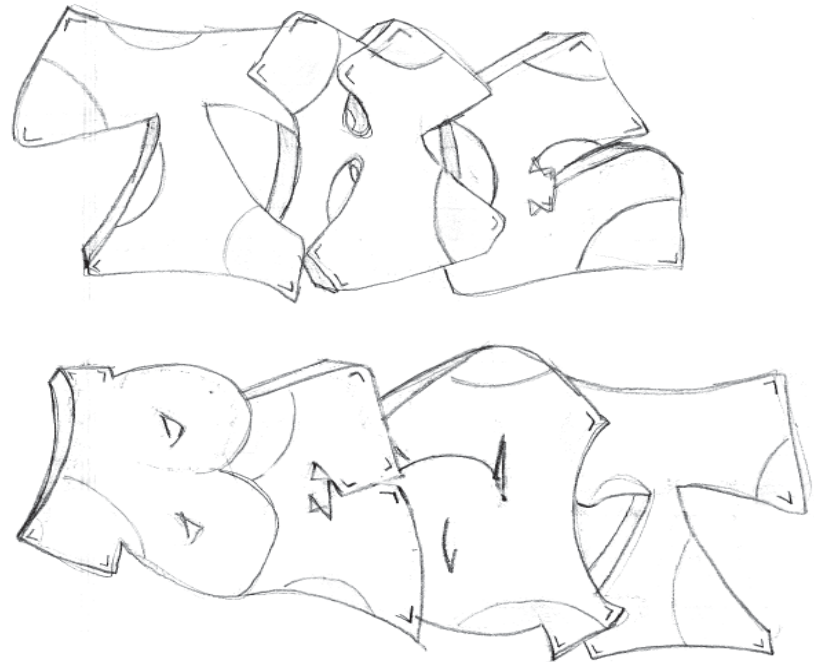
From The Beat: That's is a really interesting story. Can you tell us more about what happened when you were calling on these spirits? Everyone likes a good ghost story, but this sounds like you learned some traditional practices in Guatemala. We'd love to hear more about it.

Trap

When I hear the word trap
I think of how I fell in one
People say how I'm stupid
Because of the things I would do for fun
Now I'm caught in the system
For stealing sandwiches
I can't believe how I was so dumb
All my friends are graduating
Living their life and forgetting me
I'm here telling myself this isn't who I want to be
So now I'm going to change my life
I pray it's going to work
Because I want a new life
Not with drugs or anything that will kill me
Because I'm done holding that knife

-Justin

From The Beat: We admire you for taking responsibility for your own choices — and for making a commitment to changing those choices when you get out of here. Besides praying for a better life, do you have a step-by-step plan for success? We hope you do, and we hope it starts with going to school every day, because a high school education (at the least) is essential to avoiding falling into this trap again.



Trapped By Addiction

Things always happen and I don't know why
I guess it's true "Life sucks and then you die"
I feel as if I've just been set up to fail
When I get locked up it's normal
I don't even feel like I'm in jail
I hope when I leave this will be my last
So I can take all this sh** and finally put it in my past
I remember when I used to hate coming here
Because it interrupted my plans
Of getting messed up and sippin' some beer
Going to parties and getting' with drunk guys
They'd tell me anything to get in my pants — all kinds of lies
I know things are always gonna happen
and I'm not going to know why
But at least I've grown up
and now don't look forward to die

-Jamie

From The Beat: When you say you've grown up, exactly what do you mean? Are you quitting those drugs and drink that you used to plan for? When you say you used to hate coming here, does that mean you don't hate it any more? We hope you aren't getting comfortable here, because this is a place that makes you dependent on others to make all your decisions for you, while you need to develop your own independent judgments so you can function on the outs without risking your freedom again. Since you've "grown up," what changes do you see in your life from this moment forward?

I Hate

I hate you because you beat me when I was a little child
For little things that didn't mean anything
I hate you because you treated me like trash
I hate you because you told me I wasn't worth anything
I hate you because you called me a disgrace
I hate you because you treated me like a little Cinderella in your house
I hate you because you told me I wouldn't make it in life
I hate you because you always would embarrass and humiliate me
I hate you because you mistreated me
And now, I hate you because you told me I'm the reason she's gone
(My grandmother)
Every time I see your face I hate you even more

-Lil' Mary

From The Beat: This is a lot of hate to carry around with you, even if it's all deserved. The problem with holding so much negativity inside you is that it begins to eat at you, destroying you from the inside, while having no effect on the object of your hate. You cannot change the way you were treated by this person, and you're under no obligation to love or even like her. But we think it's in your interest to get past the past, to focus on a future that isn't consumed by hate. That way, you can start to heal from the wounds she inflicted on your child's soul, and enter adulthood without this destructive baggage.

I feel as if I've just been set up to fail
When I get locked up it's normal
I don't even feel like I'm in jail

Hey, What's Up?

It's Crazy Legs again. I have a little bit of advice for you who are having trouble dealin' with being locked up. "It will be all right in the end. If it's not all right then it's not the end."

Don't be in here starting trouble with people. Just don't bother people and have as much fun as possible. Do as I say, and I promise time will fly. No one will have a reason to fight you because you didn't bother them. I'm not sayin' be a punk, but just don't start nothin'. If someone starts it with you, that's a different story. But make your time in here as easy as possible because you're the one who will deal with the consequences.

I'll leave the rest up to you. Talk to you later.

-Crazy Legs

From The Beat: We think your advice works just as well for those on the outs as for those locked up. If you act with the same restraint everywhere, then "no one will have a reason to fight you because you didn't bother them." Is this a philosophy you've always honored, or is this something new in your life? How is it working?

I Know You're The One

When I seen you four years ago
I fell in love with you
My heart started pounding
'Cause I knew you were the one
You make my life feel so much better
Because you're always with me
You make me glow like no one has before
I wish we were together 'cause I feel all alone
Without you I don't believe I can go on
I smile at people but it's a sad smile
'Cause we should be together for the rest of our lives
Now that we're not together
Our lives are upside down
But we'll soon be together for the rest of our lives
Dedicated to my love

-Bolita

From The Beat: We have followed your progress through your writing for a while now, Bolita, and we think you are ready to make adult decisions for yourself. Therefore, if you think this is the man for you, and you tell us that you two are truly in love, we believe you and wish you nothing but the best of luck.

Defining Myself

What's up Beat? The way I define myself is the way I actually am. On the outs, I don't wear those Girbauds, Ecco, Lot 29, you get my point? I wear Banana Republic, Kenneth Cole, Armani, etc. I like to dress like this, expensive brand names, because it keeps my identity a secret. Only my friends will know the true me, but when it comes down to strangers, they'll look at me like I am a harmless person, and that's good.

I don't have to worry about police pulling me over because of my appearance, and I don't have to worry about other people trying to start fights with me. I want to lead a quiet, untroubled life with many secrets.

Another reason I wear expensive brand name clothing is because they're comfortable. So that's all I got to say. Peace!

-Reborn

From The Beat: We think the best reason you gave for your style is that the clothes you wear are comfortable. It's also smart that you don't advertise your "true self" by your clothes style. But that brings us to the heart of the matter, which is your true self... If your "costume" is designed to camouflage dirt you are doing, you can only hide it for so long. Sooner or later, you'll make that mistake that will put you in county clothes. In fact, that's just what you're wearing now. So somehow you're strategy failed you. How did that happen?

Nowhere Fast

Since an infant been living the life of misery

Intoxicated decisions

Should I blame the Hennessy?

I'm goin' nowhere fast,

Without the proper direction

Now lost in a concrete jungle,

Led by misconception

It's like quicksand

As I struggle, the deeper I get

Livin' life trapped behind bars

But for some reason I don't regret

Should I have held back

When doin' dirt with my homies?

Letting loose on so-called phonies

Now got me feelin' real lonely

The main thing is that I stay on my feet

And to relieve this stress

I stay in touch with The Beat

-Rags To Riches

From The Beat: We like your strategy to stay in touch with The Beat as a way to relieve stress. But an even more effective way is to avoid the situations that put you into stress in the first place so there would be no need for stress-relief. We're not sure how much alcohol played a role in your current troubles, but we do know that it is a major cause of a lot of young people's downfalls, so we hope you address that problem directly, seeking help if you need it (AA, NA, etc.). When you say you don't regret doing dirt with your homies, we have to ask: do you regret the consequences?

I'm Trapped!

I'm Trapped!

Sometimes I want to snap!

Looking at these four white walls

Trapped in Juvenile Hall

I don't want to live this way

Doing what other people say

Asking to take a sit

Damn I hate this shhh

I'd rather be on the outs or on EMP

At least I would get to see my family and homies

But I'm trapped and can't do anything about it

I'm Stoney from South San Francisco

And I'm a gang member

Do something about it!

-Stoney

From The Beat: There's nothing we can do about it (your being a gang member). But we can tell you that the trap you complain about begins with your affiliation, because it means you're not your own person. Of course you'd rather be out — everybody would — but if you expect the system to accommodate your wishes, while at the same time doing the things that lead young people to juvenile hall, you're still thinking like a child. Or, maybe you're just getting comfortable in this setting, because by daring the system to do something about your gang membership, you're asking for more of the same.

Trapped

Trapped

Here on this hell on earth

'Cause I've been cursed since birth

From the very breath I took first

Till I'm ridin' it out in a hearse

Jealousy and envy, shame and pity

Equal to weed and Remy, just all in me

All the way to my last penny

I'm greedy 'cause I'm needy

Trapped in an evil mind of state

And been blinded since the very day in which I came

But it's gone be all right

It's gone be all right

That's what my momma told me every night

Yeah young boy, we gone see the light

But don't worry

Ya time will come to beam

They way the sun shine

-Yung Pook

From The Beat: Even though we understand the motive for medicating yourself with weed and Remy, we don't think the jealousy, envy, shame and pity that's inside you will ever get addressed in any positive way by masking them with chemical comfort. We don't know if "it's all gone be all right" or not, but doing nothing more than deadening the pain can't get you there. We'd like to know more about why you feel you've been cursed since birth, and what your plans for the future include, especially if you want a future different from your past.

Who Is Young Royal?

I'm a rogue-like animal, dangerous like Hannibal

A participant of the Hyphy Movement

I ain't got dreads but I go dumb like Fabby do it

I'm a young hood star but not quite grown

Mac Dre's my idol but I got a style of my own

I'm a cocky lil' somethin' and I can't help it

I probably took ya girl, 'cause my game, she felt it

17 years in the game, but I'm still learnin'

I'm hood rich baby, I'm in jail still earnin'

Young Royal's what they call me and I ain't complainin'

I make my money spittin' baby, ain't got time gang bangin'

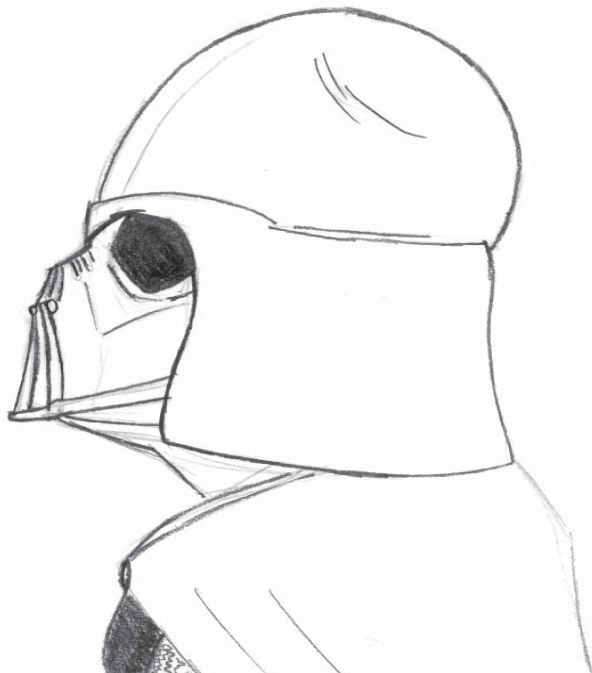
This for all my young hustlas, do y'all thang homies

This is who I am but ya'll still don't know me

-Young Royal

From The Beat: We may not know you, Young Royal, but we can see where your "hood star" performance has led you... This game you're "still learnin'" includes lessons from lock-up. Have you learned any of those lessons? Like what?

Jealousy
and envy,
shame
and pity
Equal to
weed and
Remy, just
all in me



My Lincoln

A Lincoln Town car on some silver Daytons

Candy green paint with a Cali Livin' painting

Chrome hydraulics in the trunk

Two 15 in a customized box

White leather interior and a Kenwood TV receiver

Some flows on the exhaust

So you can hear me coming down the block

Tinted and bullet proof windows

Hot boxing with some @*#! Lamborghini doors

With the body two inches from the floor

That's the ride that no one will ignore

-Tor

From The Beat: Well, exactly, Tor, you'll be so slick that nobody can ignore you — including the 5-0 who will be most interested in that attention grabbing sound system, while wondering what those tinted and bullet proof windows are for... (But if you get past this obstacle, we'd love a ride...)

Trapped In A Tight Situation

When I hear the word "trapped," I think of being stuck in a tight situation. I feel trapped most of the time in my life; whether it being caused by my parents, friends or in jail. I am in jail in the first place for burglary, twice.

My first charge took place in Macy's of Stonestown Mall in San Francisco. I was shopping with my friend when all of a sudden I see her stealing clothes. In the process, she asks me to put some in my bag, because "she didn't want it to look suspicious" on her part. She didn't want it to look like her bag was overly loaded. When we were ready to leave, we walked out and I guess she forgot to pull sensors off some of her clothes. The sensors went off and we were caught.

We were both arrested and were taken into custody of the SFPD. The security guards told us we weren't going to get arrested, and that all I had to do (since I was still a minor and she wasn't) was call my parents to pick me up and they wouldn't charge me with anything. I didn't have my parent's cell phone numbers memorized, so I asked if I could call on my cell phone. They didn't allow me to, and since I couldn't call my parents, and wasn't allowed to call any guardians, they called the SFPD.

As I was in the process of only getting probation, another friend and I got caught again at Serramonte Mall in Daly City. Once again, I didn't want my friend to go in alone, so I went in with her, and a seeker saw her slip hair dye into my bag.

(To be continued...)

-No Name

From The Beat: We don't know if it's just an oversight that you didn't put a name to this piece, or whether you'd rather not be identified. But we have to say from reading this that your friends are not the ones getting you into these situations, you are getting yourself into them. It sounds like you are more loyal to your friends than you are to yourself. Once you get out of here, we hope you find a way to take some responsibility for your own decisions — and the ability to say "No" to your "friends."

Anger And Hate

I'm trapped within this place

Everyone's full of anger and hate

I'm told how to walk, or when I can talk

What I can eat or when I can sleep

Everyone wakes up bitchin'

And every day there's a roommate switchin'

I'm tired of everyone's lies

Every night someone runs to their room to cry

Some people throwing up their meals

I always wonder how they must feel

Everyone turns their back on you

No matter what you do

One minute you're friends

And the next minute it came to an end

What's up with this place?

You get judged by your damn race

You sleep in a box

Laying on somebody else's cot

Is this where you want to live and raise your damn kid?

Don't you all realize it?

We trapped in this place

Full of anger and hate

-Jenn

From The Beat: Actually, anger and hate are traps for all of us. But of course, where you are is a very unnatural setting and the judgments you make here about how people act don't really carry over to the outside world. So, all we can tell you is we hope you are able to adjust to this stressful environment — but not so well that you get comfortable. Let the misery of this place be a constant reminder that you never want to come back.

Trapped With My Mom

I've been feeling trapped, trying to make things right with my mom. I don't know what else to do to get my life right. I've been thinking good stuff, but I don't know how to do it right. I think I need time to make things clear on my mind. I think I need some help to try to work with that.

My mom is a good person. She always gives me protection. But I need to realize that things need to work out with my mom. Sometimes I feel trapped when I'm talking to her. But I only need to say that I like to be with her.

-Pook

From The Beat: What kind of help do you think you need to clear your head and start thinking in specific terms about how to make things better between you and your mom? When you say you sometimes feel trapped when talking to her, what do those conversations sound like? Are you trapped because you can't say what you want to say, or because you can't control your emotions (anger) when you talk to her? Are things getting better between you? In what ways?

Weird Place

This place is weird and it's full of weirdoes
If you tell the truth, you're labeled a snitch
If you show any signs of weakness, you're in for a stitch

If you're smart you get called a square
But when you need help, nobody's there
This place is weird, and it's full of weirdoes

-No Name

From The Beat: We wish we knew who we were reading, because we think in these few lines you've defined this place very well. There's only one solution: get out and never come back!

Goodbye

If I could turn back the hands of time
I'd go back to the day I made you mine
See, looking in your eyes

I never realized that they were full of lies

I gave you my all

and you made me fall

I should have known from the start

that you'd break my heart

I don't think that you knew

all the pain you put me through

I don't think you knew

just how much I love you

and just how much I care

I can't stand you not being there

I miss your hands running through my hair

and the way my head would rest on your lap

while I looked up at you

and you looked down at me

and it was plain to see

that you were the one for me

And then you would look into my eyes and say

"Baby, I love you and I'll put no other female above you"

And when I looked into your eyes

I could see into your soul

and I knew you made me whole

You told me, "I'll never leave you baby, never

We'll be together forever"

You promised me you'd never lie

we were ride or die and you would stand by

Now I don't know what to do

I can't keep my mind off of you

even though we're through

I just wish you knew how I feel

that this love is real

and you'd forget the drug deals

I can't put you in the past

'cause you said our love would last

but stuff went downhill fast

I need you here with me

I'm down on my knees

begging God please

to send you back to me

and make you see

that you're the only one for me

Someone tell me what to do

being NAs means I can't see or talk to you

but I have to get through

How can I be with you?

When our love is so far?

How can I be with you?

When you're behind bars?

I love you so much

the pain is too much

knowing we'll never be together again

just tears me apart

and breaks my heart beyond repair

I'm in such despair

I need you there

I break down and cry

"God, why can't I die?"

Why did you lie?

You call me your baby and then you betray me

all while you were playin' me"

Now all I do is lay in my bed

remembering every word that you said

images of you still stuck in my head

they won't go away

I want them to stay

but they drive me insane

because I think about you everyday

and I just need to say...

Goodbye

-Valerie

From The Beat: We can see how deeply you were in love with this man who did you wrong — and who apparently kept the promises he made to what he truly loves — his drugs — but not to you. We're sorry you had to experience the deep pain of love, but it's the other side of the coin that lifts you into the clouds... It comes with the territory. You say your heart is broken beyond repair, and we're sure it feels like that, but we're just as sure (based on our years of experience with both the thrill and the heartbreak of love) that your heart will mend, and that there is someone that you will meet who will value and respect you as you deserve. That's how broken hearts mend.

Why I Hate Bush

I've always hated Bush ever since I laid my eyes on him for the first time. First off, he looks like a damn monkey, which he really is. He is a monkey who does everything his daddy and friends tell him to do. How did we get stuck with a monkey president? Are there that many ignorant red necks in this country to vote for him?

Bush declares war on Iraq because he has to protect America from the "weapons of mass destruction." Did we ever find those weapons? After he's trying to stop all these "weapons of mass destruction" from all these other countries you can drive a couple hours outside the Bay Area and find them sticking out on the other side of the freeway.

Come on, we all know why he's in Iraq. He wants the oil. He actually could be spending that money on research for hybrid cars instead of this stupid war, which may I remind you was supposed to be over a few years ago. But no, he wants to "restore the peace" where he keeps sending our youth over to fight for him. He treats the soldiers as nothing but pawns because that's all they are to him is pawns. He wants all the American youth to go fight in this stupid war. Why doesn't he send his drunken daughters? They should be good for something there. But you know how it is. It doesn't matter who dies out there as long as it's not his family or somebody he spends a lot of money on.

-Bush Hater

From The Beat: You asked how Bush could have become president in the first place, wondering if there are "that many ignorant rednecks in this country to vote for him." So we want to remind you that six years ago, Bush lost the election for President. There were not "so many ignorant rednecks" voting for him because more than half the people voted for the other guy (Albert Gore)! But we have a system of electing presidents that takes the decision outside the popular vote. In that election, the U.S. Supreme Court — almost all appointed by Republican presidents — took over the election and gave the victory to Bush, even though he lost the election! If it makes you feel any better, the misinformation (lies?) that Bush told to get us into Iraq and the failure to have a plan to get us out has led to the sharpest drop in a president's popularity in a long time. The latest figures we saw show that more than half the people think he's doing a bad job both at home and in Iraq, and more than half trust the other party more than they trust the President. There will be an election in November for members of congress. We'll see if these new numbers affect the outcome.

Trapped In Many Ways

I am trapped in many ways such as being on probation, being locked up, or being on house arrest. I am trapped in these things because it is hard for me to get out. Once you are on probation, every little mistake you make will be added on to your criminal file, which can affect you later on. When the bad things you do add up, you can eventually get locked up.

For me, I was trapped because I was almost off probation when I made one little mistake that's going to make me start all over. Since I have a new charge on my file, the time I am going to be on probation is going to start all over again. It's hard because people were born to make mistakes, but once you do make a mistake, there is no way to turn back.

I am also trapped inside my family, and how my parents and my relatives are very strict on me. It eventually makes me feel like rebelling. I am also trapped inside my body, and I can't really change who I am because this is who I was born to be. I can't change my personality or my characteristics because this is how I was raised and how I truly am.

To me, life in general is a trap because sometimes things happen and there is nothing you can do about it. You can always make choices in your own life, but whatever you decide to do, you are still trapped in this world. The world is full of sorrow and pain, but we human beings just have to deal with it. Some people feel like they are forced to commit suicide, but I think that it is just a part of life and one of the choices that you are able to make. I think people who commit suicide are just taking the easy way out because life is never easy, and dealing with all the obstacles in life isn't easy. Each of us individuals are trapped inside ourselves, and in our own lives. People can be selfish and self-centered.

-Iris

From The Beat: This is a very thoughtful, very profound piece of writing and of thinking Iris. If life itself is a trap, are there ways to loosen or to tighten the limits of that trap? Do some of our decisions only trap us deeper, and some move us closer to freedom? Have you noticed times in your own life when you felt more trapped than at others? What are the main differences between those times? Yes, people can be selfish and self-centered, but they can also be generous and thoughtful of others. Do these extremes change the contours of the trap?

Black Beauty

If I had my perfect car I would have an all-black Infinity, black, deep dish rims with chrome lining. The whole car would have chrome lining and black tints on my car. When you open the door, black lights would light up on the side. Nice big stereo in the back with TV's on the headrest.

It would have black leather racing type seats with white trim. The seats would be perfectly smooth like my ride. My car would be a manual with a chrome-plated stick. My floor would have black chinchilla fur on the floor, so please don't put your dirty-ass feet on my rug. On my passenger side in front of the back tire would have my car's name written in chrome: Black Beauty.

-The One And Only

From The Beat: Well what are we supposed to do when we get in your car, take our shoes off? (We keep thinking of those poor little chinchillas...)

Zoa

Every time I write a poem, it's about a guy
Those feelings I wish were a lie

But today I write about something new
A best friend who has always been true
She supports me when no one else is there
And with her, I know she will always care
Whether I am wrong or right
Whether I need help in a fight

You bought me food and clothes when I had none
We always had fun

I wasn't always there to kick it
I was too busy with my guy, getting lit
But you stuck by my side
And I know you wanted me to gain back my pride

For all this and more I thank you
My best friend Zoa, we will always be coo'

-Jennifer

From The Beat: This is a very sweet tribute to someone who sounds like a true friend. How does Zoa help you gain back your pride? Where is she now? How will she help you create a life for yourself that doesn't include temporary residences in county facilities?

Meth

I don't trust these ugly faces
An' these clowns with empty souls
Born into the world of crystal meth
All these dope fiends need a hit
Got me hustlin' narcotics
Late night up on the street
Stealin' bikes and electronics

Keep my head above the water
I don't think I wanna sink
I know my girlfriend is Runner
Who just cheat on me and tweak
But I got tricks up my sleeve
Like quarter ounces of meth
I'm from this town wound up on shhh
Where it makes these chickens wet

Runnin' from tha swat team
A weapon is essential
When you sellin' methamphetamine
Who got the paraphernalia
Who got money
Who got dope
Who stay wit' hella females
'Cause all they wanna do is smoke

-Grumpy

From The Beat: You're dealing death, Grumpy, and by packing, you're inviting death into your home. You say you stay "wit' hella females," but lately you've been showering with nothing but males. Wake up! You're too old for this childish game, any more! We could understand if you had limited intelligence and just couldn't master any other task. But you're way too smart to keep contributing to the downfall of others (sometimes younger and weaker than you), and to put your own life at such great risk. No one's "got you hustlin' narcotics" except you. You are capable of so much more, which your gifts as a writer always confirm. Stop playing in these all-too-familiar fields and have the courage to truly test yourself: go to college and open your mind to the vast possibilities of life! The only thing holding you back is you!

To me, life in general is a
trap because sometimes
things happen and there is
nothing you can do about it.

Trapped And Angry

I sit here and look at the walls
And listen for keys coming down the hall
I wait for mom to stop by on Sunday
When she comes I probably won't have anything to say

Females runnin' their mouth about me
Can't do anything 'bout it otherwise they call code
three

All this anger built up inside
When they mug me down the halls they act like I'm
supposed to hide

They put on this font to act all tough and strong
But when you're on the outs you find out that that's
all wrong
Smack smack, bang bang, blood is all I see
Then me in court pleading guilty

While this happens I'm hoping it's a dream
Because I'm trapped within the anger deep inside me

-Stephanie

From The Beat: We think your anger traps you far more than these four walls! You're plotting your violent revenge for when you get free — which is just another way of plotting your own downfall! Time to start focusing on your own behavior and your own contributions to where you are, and forget about the other females running their mouths. That's their problem, and they will have to deal with their own lack of focus. But your problem is you, and we hope you shift your focus to things you can change so that you won't have to be locked up with anyone runnin' their mouth about you!

When Am I Going To Stop?

In order for me to quit doing what I do, I know I have to hit bottom in order to go back up.

-Careina

From The Beat: Have you ever considered the alternative of just quitting whatever you do right now, before you hit bottom? Why should you have to experience of how bad things can get? Can't you use your imagination to explore the depths of misery, then save yourself the trouble, and get your life back together now?

I See Angels, I See Devils

Verse 1

When I see my angel
I talk to him
When I see da devil
I talk to him
And he's tellin' me
"Go out and make money
Hustle on the block
And keep on going"
And I'm listenin'
Gettin' it
Thinkin' in my head
Am I trippin'?
I don't want to change
I'm a keep on going
This money is good
Me, myself
I like my 'hood

Hook
I see angels
And I see devils
I see monsters
Is they real?

-Unsigned

From The Beat: What does your angel tell you, when you talk to him? Do you do ever do what he says? If so, what happens then? Do you ever overrule what the devil advises you to do? What happens when you defy him? How seriously do you take the angels, devils and the monsters you see?

Jealous People Have Been Hating On Me

A lot of people have been hating on me because of my car and my lifestyle. I guess they're jealous, but whatever. I don't let anything get to me.

-Paula

From The Beat: Paula, what is your lifestyle like? How would you describe your car? That car must be totally fabulous for people to be hating on you out of jealousy because of it.

System

Man, staff just moved me and my patna, talkin' about we need to write and not talk. "If you don't want to write, you can go to your room." Man, that's so bunk. He probably gone come over here and say, "Let me see that." Man, I be getting hella tired of the system here. I can't wait 'til they transfer me to Santa Clara County. Until then, I'm out.

-Lil' Smiley

From The Beat: The Beat Within is a writing program, and sometimes those who aren't in the mood to write talk to those who are trying to become inspired and distract them—that's why the counselor gave you those alternatives. So if you're not in the mood to write, why don't you draw something for The Beat? Also, do you really think the rules in Santa Clara County juvy are going to be very different? If so, how? Wake up!

My Game

I have game. I don't think I'm ever going to quit my game. The game I have I use when I need something or want to get something. I would call it my "Player Game."

It works—I know that for a fact. I wouldn't say, like, I use it all the time. I only use it when I need or want to use it. So if I'm around a lot of breezies, I spit my game. Or when money comes into the picture, I do whatever I can to get it. But if that doesn't work, back to the breezies.

-Playa Joey

From The Beat: When you describe your "Player Game" are you implying that you're being insincere when you flirt with girls, flatter them, etc? What do you do get your money? Have you ever had a real job, when you have to show up for work at a certain hour, work all day, etc., because your employer is relying on you? Why don't you try it? It's nice to have money you worked honestly for. Then you don't have to rely on the streets, etc. All work is honorable.

It's Not Worth Six Months Locked Up

I think it's time to quit when I get out. It's not worth being in here. Doing six months is not worth being in here. As soon as I get out, I'm gonna do hella good and get off probation, so I won't end up in here.

Once I get out, I'm moving down to LA and start over—that way I get away from Marin County. Well, that's all I got to say about this topic.

-Lil' Joker

From The Beat: Maybe it will help you to move to LA when you get out, but what do you expect to be different down there? Won't you be facing the same problems, the same temptations? Isn't your real challenge to analyze what you're into up here and stand up against what you don't approve of or whatever is hurting you?

Santa Cruz

When I Started

I started getting into trouble in elementary school. The things I would do were just for fun. I didn't think: Oh no, I'm committing crimes. It wasn't like that. Now, though, too much fun got me looking at prison. So no more fun.

-Prison bound

From The Beat: We hope you don't have to spend time in prison. We also hope you've learned the difference between fun and crime.

Love

My love is like a river that never ends.
It goes down deep, like an ocean.

You're the one and only.

You're like my guardian angel.
You're beautiful like a butterfly.

Every time you're near me
I feel like I've just entered heaven.

I give you all my love
and hope you don't play with it.

You can be my baby angel
and I can be your puppet.

Please wait for me.

I promise I'll make it up to you.

From The Beat: Must be Spring

-S

My Life

What's up. It's Lil' Mike writing to you all again. If I could start over, then all I would do different is that I wouldn't have snorted all my skill up my nose. And I wouldn't have gotten caught up. I also would never have tried yay in the first place. Then I wouldn't be in as much trouble as I am. And I would have all kinds of money. And my mom would trust me more, too. Other than that, I love my life.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Those are pretty big "others", but we're betting you can overcome them. You're a smart fellow. Smart enough to be stronger than temptation, if you really want.

If I Could Change My Life

If I could wake up and change my life, I would do it by not smoking bud. And I would not kick it with the wrong people. And I would play with my family and my little brother. And I would talk with my mom better and I'd go to school and graduate.

-Nikko

From The Beat: That sounds like a good plan Nikko. And you'll have the chance to put your plan into action, we bet. So don't blow it next time...unless you really like juvy.

I'm Free

It's Lil' Mike again. But this time I got some good news. I'm getting released soon. I'll be on EMP for a month, but what the heck, it's better than being in this place. I'm so stoked. I get to see my girl, my family and da homeboys. Wish me luck. I'm out.

-Lil' Mike

From The Beat: Ok, we do wish you luck. You can handle a month of being home, can't you? You can live with a little ankle jewelry, for a while, right?



My BMW

I want a 745 Beamer. And I want the color to be candy two-tone chameleon. And I want my fallen soldiers picture spray painted on all the doors. And I want it to be on fo's. Then I want the spinner piece to be two-tone chameleon just like the whip. I want built in fans in the seats. And I want an alcohol dispenser that pops out Hennessey privilege.

-Nino

From The Beat: You will be doing your grown man thing in that for sure. Have you figured out how you will work towards that by making an honest living? Be sure to do that because as good as it will be to have something like that, it will be gone as fast as you got it if it through the means of drug money, so get it all legit. Plus, no drinking and driving! If you get caught up under the influence, or possession of, goodbye car. Confiscated!

Why I Love Pills

I love pills 'cause I commit crimes when I'm on them. When I was on a pill I will do anything for money. Most people like to rob people when they off a pill.

-Mac Dre Jr

From The Beat: Instead of popping pills why don't you try being yourself? Why put something into your body that will make you end up in a place where you are treated like a animal without freedom? Is thizzing really worth it?

My 1972

I have '72' love- a '72!
Black top cream of sheet covers
Everything's stock

I bought it for 1100 dollars!

I don't want to pimp it

everything is original,

except I have deck - a Sony' and some nines in the back

I got four-ways

the most people in my car has been seven

I have phat whites on my shhh.

-John

From The Beat: Whatever the car is, it's definitely a classic that you should treat like a baby. You didn't even say anything about what's under the hood, tell us more?!

I Feel Trapped

All day everyday
In my room going stupid
Talking out the room reading books
thinking when I'm gone y

Out of jail but that's not with people be thinking
I be thinking about the things on the streets like

girls and cars and money

and how to stay out of jail

now I'm gone run from a group home.

-Young Runner

From The Beat: Right now is the perfect time for you to be thinking about nothing other than what you going to do to better yourself once you get back out. As you can see there is no girls in there doing time with you and you can't spend no money so why are you so focused on things that are beyond your reach for the time being? Pay attention on what's going on in your life right now. Remember running from your group home will only make things worse. You are basically asking for a locked up facility, truly away from the things you enjoy.

The Game Is Sometimes Not Even A Game

What I mean by that is sometimes some people have to do what they do to survive. Some people have to make money on they own just to even eat. Not all the time it's the person robbing you is crew or out of they mind. They could be cool as hell or even someone you know. Not everyone do it to just do it. Maybe it's the only thing they know.

First, that was me until you hang around people who want something the square way. What I mean about square is handling your business that's legal. Like going to school number one. Now I know and you know, so now everything is all on you.

-Eugene

From The Beat: Thanks for the advice Eugene. What about your life? Are you just living it for survival? What's going on with you?

Time Is Now To Quit The Game

My time is now because taking people money ain't right because it's only going to come right back around. It don't have to come back today or tomorrow but it will eventually. It can be a time when you at least expect it and BAM! Here it go.

But a lot people don't understand that, until some tragic happening to them.

-Tommy

From The Beat: Well, how do you plan on quitting? And what will replace it. What will be your life's priority?

Here Again

It's me Porky. I remember last time I was here I said I would not come back to ALACO, but I guess I don't know. I got violated but this time I'm getting sent me to a group home.

I don't know, my life ain't over I could still do something with it and I plan to. I guess I'll have to sit and wait.

-Porky

From The Beat: Well, as they say, if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. While you are sitting and waiting, better use your head.

Love With Family

The love is where your family is because on the street it ain't love, it's all about respect and who got a little money in they pocket.

-Tommy

From The Beat: Money and power is not to be confused with love, good point Tommy.

When It's Time

What's up Beat, this Lil' Phil up in this unit going stupid. But I am writing this story about when will it be time to quit the game.

I think you should stop the game when it starts to get unsafe and people start wanting your life.

-Lil' Phil

From The Beat: Why do you think one should ever start the game? Why did you start the game? Has the time come for you to stop the game? We hope so because we want to see you accomplish great things with your life. Those people "wanting your life" probably don't care about your success, but we do. There's a great big world waiting to see what Lil'Phil has to offer. Are you game to step up?

Why People Hate

People get mad at other people for having things they can't have, or try to get and don't succeed in getting, so that's when that "haterism" comes in and that's when people get hurt.

Someone might jack someone for they car or they dubs or jewelry shoes or rocks or weed, anything. Some might fight because you may be getting hella girls or something. Point blank, don't hate!

-Bj

From The Beat: Ok, so people feel jealous. But, why do people resort to violence and selfish behavior. Have you ever felt jealous, and it just made you try harder to get something, without hurting anyone? What's going on - why do people behave this way?

Quitting The Game

The game don't stop
Nor wait

So if you fake

Or just can't cut the cake

Shake

It don't slow up

And for everybody

It's just not fo'

From the top

To the law

We all got to get

That's why we jumped in it

And ain't no quittin'

This how I'm livin'

So I'm-a live

You don't make what you go through

What you go through make you

The game is sharing

Not stingy

And I got it within me

Kin or friend I'm gonna show you

And let you see

The game got love

But it won't give it till it receive it

It can get hot

But also cold

See too much ya' heart turn froze

Sometimes it drop a head load

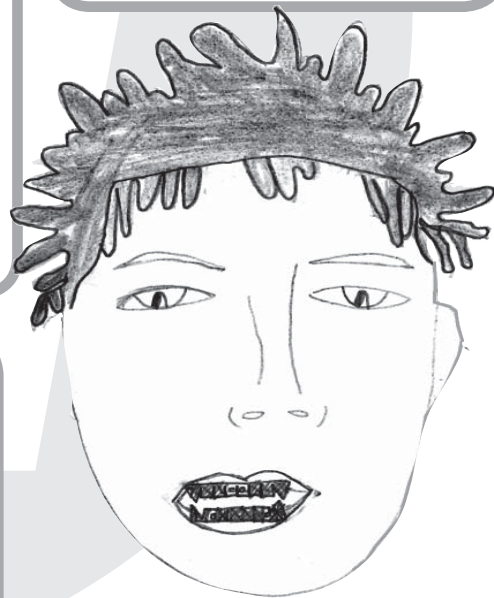
Stay solid don't fold

I say it get hard in the streets

Strapped like cleats

-Slim Up

From The Beat: Slim Up, is it ever time to quit the game? Why is the game so dangerous? Do you think that life is just this way? Is there any other lifestyle that you can imagine? Do you want your kids to be involved in this game? Why do so many people brag about having to be strapped? Wouldn't the world be better without? What kind of world do you want to be a part of?



Struggle

I struggle to live in this place.

I hate this place.

People front and fake.

Some how the weakest ninjas live good lives and the stronger get tested and into fights.

We struggle but they cruise without a scar or bruise.

I don't know I just hate it here and my family won't even call,

seems like they don't care,

I struggle to keep my cool but who knows 'cause I'm around all kinda fools.

I'm planning on changing my life for the better

I'm starting to read the Bible, now I believe that Jesus will help me

when ninjas really act like this the pen but they probably frontin',

man, forget these ninjas,

I just wanna get out of this struggle with myself and these ninjas.

-Mok

From The Beat: Life is a struggle. However life is what you make it no matter where you are. Although you are in there physically that doesn't mean that you have to be there mentally, and spiritually. Learn to live beyond your circumstances by all means.

Getting' Some Chinese Food...

A what's up y'all this Lil' TT.

Man I can't believe I'm back in here for some stupid ass shhh. Man, me and my homeboy was just going to get some Chinese food at Asian Woo and my homeboy ask this Asian for a dollar and he started tripping. So we was walking out, then all of a sudden this Asian came out of nowhere with a two by four and hit my homeboy and hit me. So we chased after him and beat the shhh out him till he couldn't move.

-Lil' TT

From The Beat: Why do you think that situation got as ugly as it did? Were you a threat to this guy? Is there another way that this situation could have been handled? Why is violence the way to solve problems? Doesn't it always create more?

Time To Quit The Game? Never

I think that I will never get out of the game because I was born around it all my life.

My uncles are all gang members so whenever they was out of jail I was with them. When I was younger I really looked up to my uncles because they was there to show me how to be a man. I remember when I was like twelve years old me and two of my uncles was on one, we went walkin' down the street and then a car pulled up besides us, it was some foes. My uncle told me to take his gun and hide beside a car so I did, then I seen my uncles hit the side of a car and passed out. So I came beside the foes who hit him and hit him with the gun. Then they got in the car and out. When I went home I was just thinking about it all night then I said forget it, that's how we live in the city.

-Lil' Bizzy

From The Beat: Just because you feel like you were born into the game and can't leave doesn't mean you have to stay in the game all your life. You have choices — you can choose to follow your uncles or create your own future. It's your life, make it yours! How would your life be different if you weren't born into the game? Maybe you can be the one to set a new trend in your family. Do you have younger cousins or siblings that look up to you? Set them on a new course. Don't let them get involved in the game. We also bet your uncles would be very happy for you if you walked away from this life.

Camp: Good, Bad and Solid

Yeah, who am I? Oakland's finest — that's who I am! Most people know me as "Solid" up here at Camp, and most ninjas respect it.

Some, they don't know what's good and bad about life up here at Camp. The good is that you go home on weekends. The bad is that you have to be around a ninja that don't care no more — and that ninja is me! You have to wake up and go to sleep and go to rec', around a solid ninja like me. If you know me, or if you see me, y'all know I'm solid.

RIP Cell: you will always be alive in our hearts.

Much love — do a good program so you can go free.

-Young Arlan Baby

From The Beat: We hope when you say you're solid that you don't mean you're always hating on the youngsters at Camp who have decided after looking into their hearts, maybe thinking about their moms or their siblings, or even a friend who died in the street like Cell — those youngsters who have decided to change their lives deserve support, even (maybe especially) from a self-styled "solid ninja".

Time To Quit?

I'll quit when I'm a ghetto street star.

All about the fame, that's all I want.

I'm sick of being known as "Andrew's lil' brother".

Every time someone talks about me,

I want them to talk about how crazy I am.

For example: "oh that dude is straight crazy!"

-Big V

From The Beat: Big V, why do you want to be known as crazy? If you really think about it, to be crazy doesn't take much courage, rather it's having no control over your actions. If you want to be admired and, do something worthy of respect, use your mind, be smart when a situation arises. Acting crazy is nothing more than what an animal would do. Wouldn't it feel better to hear, "Oh, Big V, he's hella smart!" Think about it.

Ghost? Spirits? Angels?

Yeah, I believe in ghost, spirits and angels. I felt the presence of a ghost, seen one and know so me one who has. The only time I would be scared if I had an encounter with a ghost is if I didn't know the ghost and/or if the ghost was threaten me.

I think these things are real because I felt them before and heard them talk.

-No Name

From The Beat: Interesting. What do you think happens after you die? Is there such a thing as good and bad ghosts? Hmm...

Quit The Game?

Yeah what's up wit-you? This your boy Saechao in this unit. I won't quit the game until I'm making a million dollars, sit back counting double digit stack.

I will always be with my boy, the one that's making money with me and one day we will be living large and then larger. This is all I got to say.

-Saechao

From The Beat: Saechao, be careful what game you play. If you're interested in making money, be smart about it. If you are willing to risk everything for it, you might as well get an education and play that game. There's a lot of money to be made in the business game — legal money. What do you have to lose?

The Game

I will quit the game when I get some money to take care of my family. Most people hate because they want what you want and will even kill you for it.

-Denzel

From The Beat: Isn't there a better game you can play? One where jealousy won't get you killed?

My Squad

My squad is strong

My squad won't fall

I won't let my squad down

I need them

They need me

I love my squad they love me

My squad is loyal to me

I am loyal to my squad

'Cause my squad is unstoppable

You can't kill my squad

'cause my squad is unkillable

Once again I love my squad

Shout out to my squad

Stay up.

-Lil' Eric

From The Beat: Are you as loyal to yourself, to your dreams and aspirations as you are to your squad? While it's nice to feel like you have life-long homies, it's important to remember to put yourself first. We think you, Lil Eric, is the one that is unstoppable when it comes to your personal success and growth.

This Camp

Hey Beat, how are you doing today? I'm writing you today because I would like to write about how people stay in Camp Sweeney through their weakness when they could home on the weekends. So that's why I would like for the people from Camp Sweeney to stay to their self and they could go home to their parents!

So if the people could get just stay away from the people who are trying to keep them here with them here in Camp, they would not only go home weekends but do a good program and go home to stay. So that's why I'm telling them to keep their own mind to their self.

And so if everybody wants to go home this week, try to stay away from your friends, because you do not got no friends in Camp Sweeney! Why? Because they will not be there for you when you are in still here in Camp all alone.

-Juanito

From The Beat: You are seeing things pretty clearly. Still, it's possible to find someone of a like mind there at Camp; someone who wants to do a good program, stay out of trouble, and keep away from the mix that keeps getting write-ups and taking stupid risks over the weekend at home (stupid even if they get away with it, 'cause it's still a set up for the day they don't). Or, if necessary, just as you say, keep to yourself and go home to your family, 'cause your family wants what's best for you.

Quit The Game

I think after you get shot you want to quit. But for some people it's hard to quit the game because of friends and there "rep".

The game makes you want to carry a gun. When the game is over for you (death) are forgotten by most people.

-No Name

From The Beat: This kind of lifestyle is such a shame. And not till it's over does anyone ask — What was it all for?

Ghosts...

If the person I know is a ghost and I know I am in the same room as them, it would be cool. But if I don't know that person, I would be a little scared.

-Denzel

From The Beat: That makes sense.

Love In My Heart

Where's the love, the love is in your heart. If you dig deep inside and you can find love or to love someone else, they might love you back.

Where's the love? I love no one but my family. But sometimes your own family don't even love you enough to write you a simple letter. I know that my family loves me with all their heart and I love them with all mine. And that's where the love is at.

-Baby

From The Beat: You're right — that's definitely where the love is. Do you tell your family that you would like for them to send you a letter? Do you write your family letters? We are sure many people love you. Keep your heart open.

At Camp

What's up, Beat? Well, you know it's been a long time since I wrote to The Beat. But anyways, I been at Camp for a few plus months now, and I'm almost getting ready to get out and be free again! This is the best place I been in, 'cause the group homes aren't cool. That's all for now, until next time.

-Lil' Boricua

From the Beat: It's good to hear you're still doing a good program. But we hope you're not just passing the time till you're free. You need to make some changes so you can stay free! Ya feel? No more group homes, camps, halls, jails — legit and free.

Dangerous Place

I feel like a ghost

because where I'm from

it's called ghost town

and standing out there

you don't know what gon' happen

and somebody might come by

shooting or something and there it is

I'm shot and now I'm a ghost

sitting out there next to my friends

that can't even see me

-Young Color Eyes

From The Beat: We pray that doesn't happen to you, and it won't if you follow through on your plan to stand like a man and get yourself a job and stay off the spot. If you ever are a ghost though, tell your homies what they really need to know — life in the street is not the way to go if you want to survive and stay alive.

When Will It Be Your Time To Quit The Game?

For me I say when I get older and become grown. I think when I become a father, I think I'm go get out the game, matter fact I am, 'cause I wanna be a good role model 'casue I don't want my son sellin' drugs and shootin' ninjas.

I don't think while at this young age of mine I can get out. I could but I choose to stay in it. I enjoy it, it's fun, I get money it ain't as much as I want but them days I guess gotta wait till I get older.

When I get older I'm gonna get a job, a good job, get real money and good money support my child and family. How I got in? I got in, I needed money. I always seen my ninjas out on the spot posted sellin' weed and crack. No I'm like I'm not gonna sit here and watch my patnas get money stunt everyday while I'm here broke. Can't buy weed to smoke, pills to pop, drank to drank, cleanest fits, so I start posting sellin' cream, gotta run from police daily, getting into shoot outs and shhh. Then my name became known gotta keep the rep, gotta keep money so I ma stay in the game.

My definition of the game isn't all about sellin' drugs, it's stay banging where you from, don't be no sucka let ninjas punk you I'm stay in the game my whole life, but like I said you don't gotta sell drugs to be in the game!

-DJ

From The Beat: It's seems that a lot of young people get involved in the game because of money. We are glad to hear that you want to be a good role model, but you don't have to wait 'til you are a father to be a good role model. There are plenty of young people reading your writing at this moment and you are probably making them think twice about banging. See, you've already begun to change your life. Don't give up so easily. It may be hard at times but we promise the reward for all your hard work at staying out of the game will pay off big time in the end.

Stressing At Camp

These weak staff and the kids up here, going to get what's coming to them one of these days! You ask, "Why?" And I'll tell you it's because I'm up to my neck with the people at this freaking Camp!

I'm always going to smash on these ninjas up here, but all my ninjas up here with me, hit that gate — and now I'm by myself here! But, like I said, I'm solid. So I'm not worried about none of these gum-bumpin' ninjas up here, 'cause ya stand's alone.

My time at Camp has been real, and this might be the last time I write to The Beat — so I'll leave y'all with this: Respect it 'cause you ain't going to check it, ninja!

-Young Arlan Baby

From The Beat: We're glad you wrote a second piece this week, 'cause this is no way to go out in The Beat. You know we're about love and not hate — and respect! We respect you for not running with your mates but sticking it out even if it meant standing alone. Stay strong in your heart, and for your son's sake, don't waste your program or your freedom on the words of fools trying to provoke you. You're bigger than that. When you respect yourself by doing what's right, fools can't touch it! So chill your hot temper and keep it solid with a higher knowledge.

How Did My Cousin Die?

My cousin Resse died because someone had shoot him and he die in front of me. We was in front of a store right around the block from my house. When he hit the ground, I grab his gun and started to buck.

-No Name

From The Beat: We are so sorry that you had to witness such a horrible sight. Did you want to stay with him? Were you ever afraid for your life? We hope you stay safe because we would hate for this to be your fate as well. By the way, we think you have an idea how he died.

I Don't Know When It's Time To Quit The Game?

I don't know when, I can't say, because I can't let all my homies down. I got to stay up putting it down. But the day is when I get that one baby that I don't want him or her to be in the game 'cause it's hard.

It's not easy I got shot at two times, and I don't want him to get shot or killed. But I'm still down for my hood. I just don't want my kids to be in it.

-Pedro

From The Beat: You're right. You don't want to loose your baby to violence. Imagine how your own family would feel if they lost you. Now that you feel you have a reason to want to quit the game the rest should be a little easier to accomplish. We want you and your son to have a bright future. Don't sell yourself or your son short. Experience life and all it has to offer 'cause there is a lot more out there to do than bang, or be incarcerated.

Not Ready To Quit

When I get out, I'm gonna quit the game. No more gun playing, no more standing on the corner 'cause I'm moving out of Oakland. I don't want to move, but I'll move if it means I get out.

In truth, I know I'll be back. I'm not ready to quit. I wanna be with my patnas.

My friend, he got out three days ago. I don't know if he still in or not. As for me, I hope I get out on the 6th, all I want to do is see my family.

-Roosevelt

From The Beat: We admire that you want to quit the game. But we also know it is a lot more easier said than done. Moving away from Oakland may be just what you need. We know it will be hard but sometimes we have to move away from what is familiar to be able to reflect on our lives and plant new roots. We hope you get out too because we want you to be with your family as well. But if you return to your old ways, we'll see you again and again. Make something of your life do not play the in and out game, 'cause one day you won't get out either because you're locked up or you're six feet under.

Ghost

One morning I woke up early, earlier than usual. I went to the bathroom to comb my hair. I was looking in the little mirror on top of my sink but I couldn't see myself good. So I turned and used the sliding bathtub door mirror and then through the mirror I saw a lady dressed in white go past the bathroom door. I sat n the bathroom until my dad alarm went off.

-E Riot

From The Beat: Were you scared when you saw the ghost? Do you think your house was haunted? Or that is was an old family member? How did it make you feel? Maybe this was a good ghost who was there to protect you and watch over you. Let us know if you see her again.

Ready To Stay Free

I'm ready to get out
and not go back to the block
and once I go back
I'm go be right back in here
where I'm at now
but I'm ready go home to moms
and get a nice job
to keep me from the block

-Young Color Eyes

From The Beat: Your seeing things clear! And if you do what you say once you get out of here, you will be free of the system forever. Just day by day, don't go back to your old ways, never!

Why Did I Cop That Eighth?

Why? I wanted to sell cream because I needed money to survive on the street. We been getting hit by task force.

I was on the "Nickel," on the street and we was outside standing in the rain, thizzin'. The next thing I know, 5-0 came up in an all-black van and they jumped out and grabbed me and my friend.

My friend got let loose 'cause he didn't have nothing on him, and I got taken to jail 'cause I had a eighth of weed. (I had swallowed my cream.) I went to court in a few days and they was supposed to let me out on home arrest.

But then I went back to court two weeks later and my old PO recommended Camp Sweeney. And now I'm up in here. And if I hadn't copped that eighth of weed, I'd be free, like my friend.

-Al Boo-Boo

From The Beat: Well, you need to stop selling cream, too. 'Cause there comes a day when that will catch up with you. Young people talk like the only problem was that one time they got caught with whatever, but the problem was all the times they 'got away with it' before that — 'cause then you keep doing it till you finally get caught with something, sometime, someplace. And next time, you probably won't be lucky enough to get Camp let alone Home Supe'.

Me...

I am planning to stop committing crimes when I get out this time. I'm saying this because I already been here for a month, and I'm tired of this place. I just wanna go home.

-Lil' P

From The Beat: We want you to go home too. What do you feel you've learned about yourself while being in the hall? We think the decision you've made is an excellent one. Once you're out we never want to see you back in the halls. Stay strong and keep writing and before you know it you'll be home.

Being Safe

What's up folks, it's me Jay from Hayward. For all stay up, be safe and stay on toes. I'm here in the hall doing my time, in this playground place. So as I was saying don't let any of them folks play you. Stay on point and watch yo' back.

-Jay

From The Beat: What makes the hall a "playground place"? Do your homies give you as much support as you give them? We hope you stay safe too.

Ready For My Release!

What' up, Beat! This ya boy, Heem, getting back atcha! I just signed them good o' release papers, and I only got two more weeks till I'm out this beotch.

I'm juiced! I been ready to cut from this place since I got that good program. Six months of my life been lost to the county that I can't never get back. All I can do is take it up as a loss and start over from where I began.

-Heem

From The Beat: Major props on seeing your good program through to completion. Now you do have a chance to start from where you began and take a different path. Succeed at that, and these six months will fade into the past. Go back to your old ways, and you'll be back on lock up one day sooner than later.

'Till It's Ova

What's up y'all! My name is Lil' Glen, as y'all already know. I may not hear what you saying to me, but let me talk to y'all for a minute anyway.

Well, I've been at this Camp thang for a minute though. I'm up here with some ninjas I know. Most of the solid ninjas already left Camp, but it's still some more left. Man, I'm trying to finish this program so I can do it moving with my life.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: It's natural to want to hook up with folks you know at Camp, but stop repping your crew and start thinking about what's good for you. It's time to start listening to someone who cares about you, 'cause lock up is nothing you want to do.

Angel

I found my angel
My profound angel
The beauty the strength
She has
To stay through all my downs
And she's my ups
The angel that's been there
From the beginning
The angel that keep's my head up
The blood that runs in my veins
The angel that keeps my feet down
With my heart pumping
She the air that I breath
The spirit that keeps me alive
So yeah
I found my profound angel
My sexy angel
The one that keeps me high with just a touch
From The simple warmth
Of her body that rubs against mine
And I feel the love that we share
The passion
So yeah, I found my profound angel

-Lil' Kev Mien

From The Beat: This angel of yours seems to be pretty special. Feeling love and passion are all beautiful things to experience. How did you meet this angel of yours? By the way, you are also very, very lucky that she is riding this out with you, given you been locked up for a long while. Wake up!

Angels and Ghosts In My Life

Yes, I do believe in angels, and I have felt the presence of a ghost. The ghost was my uncle, and he used to touch my shoulder. I wouldn't be scared if I seen a ghost, because I been seeing them for some time in my life. Yes, I think angels and ghost are real, and they just might be here to help you.

-Lil' Dook

From The Beat: Maybe your uncle wants you to remember some of the good advice he gave you in life, and when he touches your shoulder he's reminding you to think twice about how you're living your life.

Life In the Streets of Oakland

I'm going back to the block to sell my weed, for me and my girl, so we can live on the streets of Oakland. I'm a real ninja in the game, and I'm not going to live it for nothing.

Myself is real! Like me, I run my hood. Me and my boys are crazy out there! The streets ain't no fun and nothing to play with. You will get killed playing with the game. Myself, I don't play with nobody. It ain't me.

If you don't know, go home to your mom, 'cause the streets of Oakland don't play with no one. Them boys in the streets of Oakland are killers. That's the game I am in. There is no getting out of it. This your boy,

-Chubbs

From the Beat: You've got the talk down. It's like a form of self-hypnosis, these phrases that get repeated over and over in all these young mouths. Yes, there are killers in the street and that's why you need to find another way to make your money, 'cause your girl will miss you when you're dead or locked away for life instead — that's where the game you're in goes. We know "it's all you know" and "quitting ain't me" and all that — but don't let your own words keep you trapped, 'cause when you die there's no coming back.

Where's The Love

What's up, Beat! This your boy, Gorilla. Well, the topic is: "Where's the Love?" The love comes from your mom and from your own family.

Homeboy love comes, too, but when it's time to put in work, you feel me. But the homeboys really are my "second family". I mean my real carnals, the solid ones, no fake vatos. Well, to all in the Pen's, CYA's, County Jails, Ranches, Camps and Halls — stay strong! One love and respect always.

-Gorilla

From The Beat: From where we look, the gang life (whether it's in your birth family, your second "family", or both) is like an invisible worm that eats away at the flower of real love, sickening it, twisting it into something that hurts instead of helps you. If only you could separate out the two, choose the love and let the gang go — we'd be a lot less worried about you, ya know!

The Move

i thought it was all good but man it's all bad
'cause they moved my ass to camp from max
but i got six months so i gotta make it last
do good and get that first home pass
it's cool — goin' home every weekend after that
hopefully i'll keep it up and just pimp this program
and when people talk smack, learn how to turn my back
instead of turnin' around gettin' mad and talking back
endin' up havin' to give somebody a slap or jus' a false crack
hittin' they' jaw and breakin' they' map — it's bad
'cause you stuck wit' a new case after that
for evidence show' they' grill got a big fat gap
so i'm'a jus' pimp this camp and neva come back

-Buddamilk

From The Beat: Just so you keep your slaps under wraps, purely verbal attacks that pass as fast as thought happens 'cause you know freedom is worth more than cappin' or slappin' a fool for bumpin' his gums and then landin' back in boys' control wishin' you hadn't done what you done. Your poem displays some mature wisdom. Now tell us if you stuck to your decision.

Love For My Girl

I have love for my girl, that loves me so much.
I would do anything. I would buy her jewelry, clothes and anything she wants. I would let her have anything.

-Justin

From The Beat: Would you change your life around for her? A relationship will work a lot better without you in the Hall.

Tired

I am tired of this place
Only if you could see the look on my face
I even tired of how the food taste
The worst part is you have no private space
It's like being a slave
The only thing you can do is obey
If they say go to your room
You can only say okay
I am tired of this place
I can't see no more of my female friends
I can't stack no more of my money to spend
No more chasing fame and riches
Or running from 5-0 hitting fences
I am tired of this place
No more being with my squad
No more hollering at broads
The only thing I can do is pray to my God

-Lil' Ceez

From The Beat: While you're praying, you might try saying you're ready for change, 'cause the life your living will keep bringing you to this place or others like it (unless you catch a bullet first and buy it). Do you think that street life is pleasing to God? Seems like your ready to ask God for what you want, but what are you ready to do about what God is asking of you — and you know it's not the life you were leading before.

If I Make It

I will be out the game when I'm about forty. If I get locked up for a while, then I'm going to put it down to the fullest while I'm in there. Still I ain't tryin' a go that way. My reason is because I want to see my family grow up, day by day. You feel me?

When I get outta Camp Sweeney I'm be out to Redwood City; that's where I'm from. When I get to my early dub years, I wanna own my own house and have two Benz's on dubs. You know!

I don't know if I'll wake up and stop playin the game at an earlier age. It's up to God. I'm still puttin' it down though when I get out.

-Lil' Vamp

From The Beat: If it were up to God, you wouldn't be "puttin' it down" when you leave Camp. You're turning your back on God when you choose to do that. God wants you to see your "family grow up, day by day" just as you say! And if you change track, you won't ever come back to doing time — plus, that steady pay a job brings in will help you not only get but also keep that Benz.

The Game

This ya boy, Kudah, from max. When will it be my time to quit the game? The time I quit the game is when I get put in a casket. Quitting the game alive is something I can't see. I was baptized in this game!

-Kudah

From The Beat: Because you were born into the game, you can be the one to show others there's more to life than prison, death and pain. We know it's not easy to change, but we also know you've got the courage of a grown man.

No Time Soon

What's up Beat! This your boy Gorilla. Well, today's topic is: When will it be time to quit the game? Well, for me it will be no time soon. I'm a real gangsta, bro', you feel me?

Maybe if I get to see the age of fifty, when I become a OG. That is just how my family was raised in these streets.

Well, to all in the Pen's, Hall's, County's, Ranches, Camps and CYA's — stay strong.

-Gorilla

From The Beat: So, you did almost a year at Camp and then with two weeks left, the weekend you go home to celebrate your (sixteenth?) birthday, you don't come back. What a waste! You can say it's just how your family was raised, but we know you're smarter than that! It's like self-hypnosis, all the bull you keep telling yourself until you talk yourself into doing something way stupider than you are. If you see this — time to step up and break away from a family tradition that will hound you to the grave.

Top of My Game and Retire

When my time to stop in the game is when my name is known. All around the city of Oakland — and respected. And not until I have money so I never have to work, and I will have my pretty and thick special girl fo' me.

Yeah, that's when I'll stop and retire in the game, because the game chose me. I mean I'll just keep on making money and just won't stop until get a lot of money and have a lot of females with me — and have all kinds of cars. Don't matter what it takes!

And if I die, I'm dying a man. And I will also make enough money to support my family so nobody has to work — just by me making that good money in the game!

-Miguel

From The Beat: If it was "good" money, you wouldn't be in Camp now. Go back to the game, and you'll go back to incarceration, working your way through the juvenile system till you're in CYA — and nobody's making money there but your guards. You need to rethink these fantasies. Keep the making money, but do it by getting a high school degree and a j-o-b to support your family.



What's Good?

What's good with you? Well, all is good with me, stayin' solid as always! I'm about to do it moving in about two weeks to ROP (Rites of Passage).

I could settle for being your homie, as long as you speak the truth to me about these fake witches — and I'll do the same for you. Because the way I see: I'm living life to tell a story at the end, but I don't know if it's going to be a made-up tale or a true story. The way it's going right now, I'm ready to dismiss these actors out my life, because: if they talking, they walking; if they lying, they flying; but if they true, they stayin' close. That's how it's got to go.

Well, let me tell you more about myself — I'm hella ugly, too. I'm a get-dirty kind of boy from the 'hood (I stay right near here, in San Leandro), but I don't think I look too shabby. And I got a myspace.com that says I'm big on the streets, from what people tell me (so I know I got fans to back me up on that). Like you said about these fake witches I mess with: If I had to choose between witches and haters, I would have to congratulate the haters 'cause they will ride you to the end. Do me a favor and tell yo' man to hold on to you because if he let's you go — he be missin' out.

-Reese

From The Beat: We don't hear much about the end of that life in this little piece. What we hear is you flossing how you're all that out in the street, and that's the kind of thinking you don't need to hold onto, 'cause it stays in your brain waiting to talk you back into a life of hurt and pain that always ends the same: jails, hospitals and death. And that stock phrase about congratulating haters doesn't mean much if it has you out proving yourself to fools. When you're living life right, the street stops paying attention to you — and that's what's really cool — except for some youngster who wants out of a life of destruction and someone sends him to you. So we want to know if you will hold true to your goal to live safe, legitimate and free; or will you try to prove yourself to some new fools at ROP who want to claim you're not street.

My Time To Quit The Game

Man...I want to quit, but what else is there to do? I don't like school and all the friends I got are in the game. Also, my family is in it too, but they tell me to not get caught up in that stuff. I'll quit, not for me though, but fo' my mom and aunt.

-E Riot

From The Beat: Sometimes it feels like our world is so small and our options are limited. But in reality, you have a world of options at your fingertips. You'd be surprised at how many people would be willing to help you investigate your options — people like your mom and your aunts. If you really want to quit you can find a way.

Quittin' The Game

Me quittin' my game will be neva because my game is me and my life of how I get down and bein' me and when a ninja come to the game more than 95% of them cats can give you a good reason of they own for them doin' what they think they need to do, like to take responsibility and bein' a man and takin' care of they kid or bein' too young to get a job, and so they do what they got to do and that's on the real.

-Lil' Solid

From The Beat: Sure, we know money's hard to get out there, and we believe that a lot of the people out there doing dirt are doing it because they THINK it's the only way to provide. But you know there's also a lot of people that spend their money on grills, clothes, drank, cars, fits, a lot of stupid stuff they don't really need. You also know that no one can make money from lockdown, so if they are trying to provide for their families, they can't do it consistently if they're not making money legit. So it still doesn't seem like an ideal solution to money troubles, does it?

From Reese

What's knockin', Beat? It's your boy Reese once again, to let you know my daily dilemmas. Well, me and the unit just got out of school. We watched a movie today, called "My Block". It's a documentary on the Bay Area. So, there were a few rappers on it talking about how we do it out here. To me, it sounds like the same stuff they been sayin' for some years now, and the whole world just now discovers it!

I ain't going to be playing keep-up with these newcomers and fake imitators trying to do what we do out here. That getting krunk routine don't work out here; nobody does that "L.A." stuff. It makes us wonder what the hell they smokin'. I might sound like a hater, but you should give thanks and congratulate us haters — 'cause we'll ride you to the end. That's all I got for now Beat. I'm out.

-Reese

From The Beat: You do sound like a hater coming down on krunking like that. The part we like best about LA-style krunking and clowning, is that it represents a real alternative to gangster violence: it's another road to respect; down there even the gangsters respect it. We need something else in our streets to rival this thug violence that just keeps riding while Bay Area youth just keep dying.

Hate/Survive

This young Kudah. This topic you got on hate: I don't think it is hating. I think ninjas out there doing what they got to do to survive. Like if yo' plate is bigger than mine, then I'm going to need something off yo' plate to fill my stomach — doing what you got to do to survive.

-Kudah

From The Beat: In a world of every man for himself, no one ever gets to keep any wealth for long. But when people help each other get what they need, there's less greed — and the more you give, the more you receive. Many call the former life style "hate" and the latter, "love".

Angel On My Side

What's up Beat Within. Before I get started on my angels, how is everyone doin'? Hope everyone is kool, and pimpin' this system, this your boy Chuckie

Well ghosts, I have never heard or seen ghosts. With spirits it's a 50/50 percents that I do believe in spirits. But Angels I feel and I know that I have an Angel on my side.

Why? Well I've been through a lot of trouble on the outs. That's why I think Jesus brought me back in this place -- to protect me from what's goin' on in my hood. I feel like a cat sometimes with nine lives, man I'm so lucky to be breathing and writing this to y'all.

It's crazy, that I'm living, all I got to say is keep your heads up high, pimp this system. Be safe. My room is calling me, gotta go. Be safe, and keep your heads up high. Young Chuckie.

-Chuckie

From The Beat: Maybe it's true, the world moves in mysterious ways. And we sometimes feel the same way, when the streets get hectic, we start to feel thankful that some of you at least are on lockdown and escaping the bullets. Of course that's just a temporary solution to a permanent problem, so we have to hope that when you get out you'll find a way to avoid the trouble. Have you thought about it? Do you have a plan for how you can turn your life around and dodge the bullets for real?

There Ain't No Love

Q-vo Beat Within! This Giggles, up in Max. Well, I'm about to talk about "Where's the love?"

Man, real talk, they ain't no love in this world. Fools be hatin, always criticizing! Two-faced vatos! There ain't no love. Fools talk behind our backs, and then they come and shake your hand like it's all good. There ain't no love! Well, that's all. Alratos.

-Giggles

From The Beat: To some extent we make the world we live in, or at least, we settle too easily for a world of hate and perpetuate it by acting as if that's all there is, ever was and ever will be. It's true no one person can change the world, but you wouldn't believe how much the world seems to change in your immediate vicinity when you change yourself. Try it.

Hello World!

What's up Beat! This your real homeboy, Gorilla, from East Palo Alto. First I would like to send my love and respect to all locked up in Hillcrest and to those all over the Bay Area.

Well I'm still in this Camp. I'm going home this week, April 16th, 2006, for my birthday. You feel me? But I don't trip because I'm almost out of here.

-Gorilla

From The Beat: Maybe you should have tripped harder on the life you choose, 'cause keep living like this and you are sure to lose. You never came back from your birthday weekend — after doing your program for almost a year, two weeks to go! The truth is that you messed up months ago though when you gave up on change.

Just Me Joking

Q-Vo Beat! Como estas en la vida (How are you doing in life)? Yup, you know who this is, this be Lil' Chris, back in the pages of the peerless Beat once again.

Well, how I been doing? Man, I been over here doing my thing like a real soldado (soldier) does it, trying to maintain my composure. Ya dig? Ain't no more court for this vato so I'm just waiting to get up out of here to the big leagues (prison). Ya smell me?

Anyhow I'm not here to write on a weekly topic, but I ran across a clean joke one of my loved ones sent to me. I dug it much, so I thought I would share it with The Beat. So peep game.

JOKE:

George bush, Dick Cheney and Donald Rumsfeld are flying on Air Force One. The President looks at the vice president, chuckles, and says "You know, I could throw a thousand dollar bill out the window right now and make somebody very happy."

The vice president shrugs and says "Well, I could throw ten hundred dollar bills out the window and make ten people happy."

Not to be out done, the secretary of defense says, "Of course, I could throw a hundred ten dollar bills out the window and make a hundred people very happy."

The pilot rolls his eyes and says to his co-pilot, "Such big shots back there! Hell, I could throw all of them out the window and make fifty-six million people very happy!" (the end)

Well, Beat, I just thought I would shake that joke with you because it was funny and real at the same time. You know what I mean? So I'm about to take my leave the proper way by extending my love and respect to all incarcerated youth. Stay up. Lil' C-nut from San Leandro's 150 Crew, is out. Alratos.

-Lil C-nut

From The Beat: Yeah, it's a funny joke in the tradition of Will Rogers, who personified the common man poking fun at the powerful. Now if you can learn how to twirl a rope at the same time, we'll swear he came back to life just to write for our 'zine. We know your leaving the 150 Hall soon, heading first to YA and then to prison. You've been with us for many years, off and on, even coming to work at our offices briefly before the street pulled you back. We'll miss seeing you, but expect to see your writing in The Beat Without. We still urge you to reconsider the life style you so stubbornly cling to — even though it's sent you to prison! Remember: it's never (never) too late to change.

My Day Has Been Chosen

I don't know when is my time to go. I do believe that that day has already been chosen. I just don't know when.

If I am alive in ten years, I think I'll be doin' the exact same thing I am now. And I think I'll either be alive or six feet under.

-No Name

From The Beat: This is sort of a pessimistic view of the future, don't you think?

Dedicated To RIP Lil' Arturo

Why did you leave us where did you go?
I'm waiting on your response, will I ever know?
Will you ever come back? To at least say your last good bye?
Were you drunk, were you sober, or were you high?
Maybe I'm trippin' and it's all just a lie
It'll be hard to let you go because we were so tight
Why did they kill you they had no right!

RIP homie you will be missed forever
All I got is memories of me and you kickin' it together.
RIP Lil' Arturo.

-Juicy

From The Beat: Losing someone is so hard, but when it's so long before their time, it's even harder. Have you had to say goodbye to other homies before their time? Do you think whatever the reasons, it was worth it? It seems like there are a lot of young people killing each other these days, before they even understand the value of life. Everyone has beef at one time or another, but why do you think people kill each other now instead of just getting in a fight, where the winner and the loser both walk away?

Questioning My Life

Is this the type of place I will be in for the rest of my days?
All because I decided not to change my old ways?
I don't want this to be my destiny this place ain't for me.
I know because of my actions it may be hard to see.
I can't say I'll prove you wrong 'cause I know I will prove you right.
But I promise to try with all my might.
I want to go home and do what I do, smoke a blunt pop a pill.
I ain't playing, I'm keeping it real.
Will I ever change for my own sake?
Or will I make and bake my own cake?
I don't wanna stop doing nothing
I wanna go back to the hoop
Why is it a struggle for me to do good?
Until I find out I will remain the same.
Doing what I do remaining true to the game.

-Bianca

From The Beat: It's a struggle for you because you were surrounded by that life while growing up (and you're still growing up). Do you think if you had a stable situation, parents who were always there, comforting, providing, making sure you went to school, did your homework, don't you think you might not be where you are right this minute? But now you need to make your own decisions. Do you want to go to CYA and then later the state Pen? You know you're on a path that keeps pulling you that way. You'll have to try with all your might to pull back the other way. But that means changing your ways, and you know it. One thing we can say, is smoking blunts and popping pills does not stay interesting forever. Don't let it rule you while it still is.

Married To The Game

What's up wit it Beat? This is that one and only Lil' TroubleSum...

Now when will it be time fo' me to hang my shoes up? Never!! I say that 'cause I don't plan on changin' fo' nobody. If they don't like the way I get down, oh well they ain't got no love fo' me, they just straight marks, besides I love my neighborhood ain't shhh changed mang. I wouldn't be me if I changed, that's all I can say about that. Now there's foo's that say they loyal, got love fo' you, or play the role to get by.

But once they get blurred for some hot shhh they singin' like it's live on TV. They wasn't meant fo' the game in the first place they thought it was "cool" to kick it, real fools roll in silence mang. Now to da Beat people y'all need to print this piece 'cause it's as real as it gets, let that be da reason. One love,

I ride fo' you/You ride fo' me, yo' enemies my enemies, 'cause you ain't never had a friend like me.-Tupac

-Lil' Juanito

From The Beat: Sigh. Loyalty and integrity are two of the most admirable human qualities, and we know that in some twisted way, we know you believe that pledging allegiance to your gang, you are showing yourself to be a loyal and trustworthy person. But what exactly are you protecting? Count for yourself all the young people (on both sides) killed, arrested, or otherwise destroyed by the game. And then explain to us how in God's name it could be worth it. Peace.

Until My Casket Drops

Saludos Beat, my honor and embracements laced wit loyalty to those that's worthy. Just touchin' on this topic of "When will it be my time to quit the game?" ...Homie, it's 'til my casket drops. But peep game, my actions speak louder than words. See, I ain't feelin' them vatos that pledge allegiance, get caught and wanna use God as an excuse to get out the game. Or the ones that snitch and get ghost. Naw, can't go out like that. You knew the consequences before you got caught, but you let your jaw drop when them steel doors lock.

Straight up, I ain't gon' out. I can't see myself at that level. I'ma do what I gotta do to keep from bein' another RIP face on a shirt. But when my time comes and I take my final breath and die, please forgive me for my sins and let my soul rise to the sky. And please believe, I will stand tall through it all. Livin' life wit' no remorse, no regrets, stayin' on toes with my head held high.

-Young Shorty

From The Beat: Let's say we were racist white politicians (RWP). We'd take this little piece of yours as a relief. Our conversation would go like this: RWP#1: Are there any young brown people who could get in the way of all our grimy moneymaking schemes? Right now we make a lot of money letting them kill each other over penny change and drugs RWP#2: Nope. There's one who's pretty smart, he's got skills and talent and political passion. But don't worry, we've got him blindsided, he doesn't see the big picture, and if he ever does turn a gun on someone, he'll do it on another brown person just like him. RWP#1: Aaah, good, care to shoot another round of golf? RWP#2: Sure, and this one's on me. I made a lot of money last week off of a big land deal. Hey Luis! Go get my clubs, and hurry up!

A Life to Live

Man, it ain't about to stop dude,
we ain't played out here in Oakland
But I'm getting ' married, you feel me.
Dude, you think it's a game.
The truth is the little cats is getting' hurt.
But peoples got familia, ya mean?
It's gon' down in the town,
But I got a purpose in this world.
It ain't no secret smiles and cry out here ya did
I mean
But, real talk, I got a life to live.

-B

From The Beat: This poem is straight cryptic, but if what you're trying to say is that you have a purpose in this world worth more than winding up an Oakland casualty, then we're behind that one hundred percent. What is that purpose? You tell us!

It Ain't Good

Where's the love? It ain't no love in the streets, yo' girl or yo' boyfriend, because yo' patnas might be around as long as you flossin' and stunnin'.... but you know what?

Your so-called friends is like girls, because once the weed, pills, and drank is gone, so are they. But girls just want yo' money they just want you eat it all the time and then you go buy her something to eat, man, you just trickin'. I wish a girl would use me for sex. And my money, please, she gon' be on the ten o'clock news. Messin' with me, love my ass in da street.

Man this shhhh ain't never gon' change, streets always gon' be around the streets got a lot of my people life in prison and killed. I seen some people that used to have bread when I was younger, like five years old, now they just cracked out.

Man, it ain't good.

-Dame

From The Beat: No, it's not a damn bit good...so tell us this. Do you think there's any way to escape from that cycle, do you know any people from the hood who have found another way out? People that grew up and got legit jobs and families, as opposed to falling by the bullet or falling by the system? If not, what do you think it would take to break free, to find another way?

The Block

People got different hustles on different blocks. We got people selling weed on this corner, people selling crack on that corner we got people selling heroin on this corner, people selling coke on that corner. We even got tracks where people sell everything including they body.

Don't go and sell yo' products on somebody else corner unless you lookin' for some hood beef. People grind on the block that they grew up on. So basically everybody know everybody, everybody is somebody's cousin.

Even if you ain't grindin' and yo pockets is clean on the block you can still go reunite with the team. Get drunk fade em' up wit'the bros. Scrape around and do something in this town.

- Lil' Sis

From The Beat: Sounds like a scene in a movie. But not a very happy one.

Quitting the Game

I'm gonna quit the day I get out because I've been thinking a lot in my room about family and my future. The reason why I did what I did to be back in here was because I'm more focused on my look and how people think of me. I shop life because clothes made me feel good and made me look good...but now I know it's not worth it.

-Anna

From The Beat: We know what you mean. And of course you're right. How you look or dress means nothing in the scope of your life, relationships and overall happiness. But you should know that it's hard for most folks to ignore it. If you see their friends wearing fly gear, then of course you want it too! It's only natural. But if you're going to be different, do right, finish school, and stop getting arrested, you'll have to find creative ways to dress cool without buying \$100 sneakers. And you know what, it will probably be a more unique style that others will envy!

Quit?

What's up with it Beat Within. Well, today's topic is when will it be time to quit. That's a hard question. I guess I can say that when the time is right. Money stacked and when I'm ready.

Like right now it's not the time. I got a long ways to go. And if I decide to not stop then it'll be either when I get locked up (which I'm not gonna let happen) or 'till death do us part.

-Faithful

From The Beat: It's hard to argue safety, future, education, and freedom against a stack of bills. Get it right, your thinking is all messed up!

The Return Of My Son

I believe in ghosts. One time this one person told me that someone was following me and I was like, "What are you talking about?" He saw a ghost and I sometimes felt someone or something following me. I could see it out of the corner of my eyes. He said, "Yo' girl had an abortion," and I said, "Yes." Then he said he was my son; I say my son because I always wanted a son and I've seen a ball in house was going in and out of the room.

-Stoneface

From The Beat: Was this one of those moments that left the hair on the back of your neck standing up? We feel like it definitely would have been for us. We know that choosing to not have a child is very difficult and can be haunting with or without a ghost. And you are very young so we have no doubt that when you meet the right person and are ready children will be in your future.

It's My Time But Am I Ready?

Man, on the real, it's my time to get out the game. I know that I lied to myself before about it being my time but its not easy. It's a part of me doing what I do but for some reason I know that I could do this and get out the game.

-Stoneface

From The Beat: Of course you can do this. We understand and agree that it's not easy to get out of the life. It's never easy to change habits that are so ingrained in us that feel like second nature rather than choices. But that just means you have to work twice as hard and twice as much to get on track.

To My Long Lost Brother

To my long lost brother I ain't seen in about two years It's funny 'cause when he was getting out I was coming in It's funny to have a brother and you never really see him And then when you in jail it shows how much you really miss him

I remember when we use to always fight ova nothin' And then after he beat me up he will tell me I'm still his lil ninja

Man I miss my big brother it's been two long years And the time ain't getting no shorter for us So until we meet again I love you big bra To my long lost brother

-Dada

From The Beat: Doing time gives you time to think about what's really important, and you realize it's not the fame or the game but the people you love and who give you love that you're really missing. But now go back to the same old same, and the both of you will end up with this same old pain of separation and incarceration. Use the time you're facing to rethink your life, and then when you get out, stay out by living right.

I Want Money

Man I don't know when I'm going to quit the game - the game is my life right now.

My friends and me we have love and money. When you are out there doing yo thing you don't think about death or jail, all you think about is that next buck and how you gonna get it. Every day when I get up all I think about being rich. I know if I was I might not quit the way I see it big money heavy weight.

-Money hungry

From The Beat: Because you aren't thinking about jail or death when you are out there, does not mean that you shouldn't be. What good does the next buck do if you are in a coffin or a cell? How far does that buck go then? The problem with the game is that there is no end - there will never be enough money because greed like any addiction keeps pushing the finish line further and further from you every time you feel like you are getting close. When you grow up with no money, there is nothing more comforting sometimes like the thought of being filthy rich. And money might help, for a little while at least, but you will never find true happiness in a piece of paper. No one has yet and you are no different.

Me and My Grandma

When I was born, my grandma was going to leave me at the hospital.

Since then we never got along, now I'm sitting in the Hall, looking at four walls, hoping she lets me back home, every night before I go to court I'm praying that my grandma says she wants me to come back home.

I love my grandma but I never showed her my real love. I wake up calling her b- and h-s. She had enough of it and called my PO. Now I'm calling her every day, saying I'm sorry for what I did to her. Now I promise to go home respecting her, and going to school.

-A-Dude

From The Beat: Sounds like you and your grandma have had real drama. But regardless of how things started off at the beginning, she must really love you because she decided to take you home and she's been taking care of you ever since. What about you? In your heart of hearts you love her too, but you rage at her when you're home? Why do you think that happens? Good luck, we hope you and your family manage to reunite.

Lost

Everything just got lost in the struggle

-Lil' Hogg

From The Beat: Short, to the point and all too true.

I've Seen A Ghost

Yes, I do believe in ghosts, spirits, and angels. Yes I have felt in the presence of a ghost. It was in the summer of 2005 and I was walking in the middle of the night to go to the bathroom and I could have sworn I saw a ghost go by me in the living room on my way to the bathroom.

Yes, all things are real because if you can see it then it must be real.

-King Dre

From The Beat: Did you ever find out anything about where that vision might have come from? Did you ever wonder who or what it could have been? Were you scared at the time?

If I Can Change...

...I'll go to school, graduate and become an NBA basketball player, and I will have a family that I can carry and love.

-Dannut

From The Beat: If you can change? You don't need to make that an "IF." Because if you really want these things - to graduate, to play basketball, you can make these things come true. That doesn't mean you can play for the NBA - but you could play all through college, you could be an agent, you could be a doctor who specializes in athletic injuries, you could be a basketball coach... there are dozens of great careers that can come from loving a sport.

Don't Run

What's up Beat, this yo' boy Laron. They about to send me to Boys Republic in LA. Damn, I'm a pimp that shhh because that's what I do. So for you that ain't going home and going to a placement you ninjas need to stop thinking about running, because it ain't gon' do nothing but end up you back in here. I'm about to air it.

-RIP Davon

-Laron

From The Beat: Way we see it, you telling everyone not to run is the same as you promising us and yourself that you're not going to run from your placement. Have you made that decision, that no matter what, you won't run?

Let Me Know

Where's the Love
Pain and stress
Nights with no rest
Fights wit the best
You say you blessed

Wait hold up
Reality check
Then you blessed
Where's the love
Me and my girlfriend
Kisses and hugs
Long night arguin'
Is it really love
We all need love
She say I'm the hub
Is it really true?

Let me know, let me know
Ain't tryin' be the fool

-DJ

From The Beat: "The one you hurt the most is the one you love the most" Why do people that love each other fight so much? We don't have the answer, but this poem makes art we can all relate to out of the question.

Nothing To Add

I'm a Catholic and believe in all of the above but have no stories to tell.

-Lil Hogg

From The Beat: Seeing is believing is not the case for all of us.

Seeing My Dad

I can't wait until my next court date. It is six days from now, actually. I can't wait to get out of here and visit my dad. He is up in Santa Rita right now, and it's been a while since I seen my dad.

-Young son

From The Beat: We hope you get a chance to see your dad soon. It must be heard to have to talk to each other between bars. How long ago did he get locked up? Do you live with him ordinarily? Are you similar to him? Did you see a lot of him growing up?

Ghosts

I think they are all over the hood. I think people are superstitious or just scared, so they overreact. But me personally, I think reincarnation and angels are true.

-Anon

From The Beat: If that's true, then have you ever asked yourself what you would be reincarnated as next time around, or what you were last time around? What about Angels? Have you ever seen one? Or has anyone you know ever seen one?

Not Ready to Quit

I know I can quit the game, but I can't right now because I need some mo' dough. When I say I need some mo' dough I need a couple of meal tickets.

Ninjas always talkin' 'bout they ain't quitting the game because they already in the game that shhh don't mean nothing to me. Well everybody probably can't because they don't know nothin' but the game or they grinding fo' the next ninja. Ninjas like that shouldn't be in the game because it seem like they don't know the game, and if you gon' be in the game, you don't know the game. That be them fake ninjas thinkin' they runnin' shhh. Let them ninjas come to my hood, they won't make it out. Know that.

-Laron

From The Beat: Meal tickets? Come now, Laron, you can do better than that. Haven't you been locked up for long enough to know that dirty money just sends you into the system? Couldn't you live off the money that comes from legit work?

The Meaning Of My Name

L: loveable
A: active
M: memorable
A: angel
R: respectful
R: responsible

-Lamar

From The Beat: You are all these things and more. It's wonderful that you find great pride and meaning in your name and that you feel you have all these great qualities.

When Will It Be Time To Quit

My time to quit is never because it's never enough paper in the dope game. If I make 100 racks, then my goal gon' go to 200 racks.

Only way it's gon' be time to quit, is when I'm dead and gone. When I go to jail, I'm just gon' lay my head down for the time I'm down, and when I get out - I'm back on the block getting that chips and duckyin' the laws tryin' a stay under.

-Lil' E

From The Beat: You're tall as a man, and your voice is deep as a man's, and you talk as hard as you think a man should talk - but your head is full of boyish dreams. You deserve a future far better than the one you're mapping out for yourself.

An Interview With Jay Bandit

TBW: Hi, Jerry, you've been in our Beat workshops in B1 in YGC and now you're down at the Ranch. It's sad to see you down here, but it's fun to hang with you. What's it like for you to be down at the Ranch?

J: I've been down here for a year and two months now. I'm getting out in thirteen days, so I guess it's all good now. Let me put it like this: I'm grateful I didn't go to the Y for the crime I committed. I almost feel like I fell in the system's trap by messin' up, by not givin' a damn about my behavior down here, but I did make it and I did learn a lot from it.

TBW: So, it actually helped you, being down here at the Ranch?

J: Yeah, it helped open more doors for me, giving me more options to maneuver.

TBW: What doors have opened for you?

J: It gave me a lot of time to think about things—what I want to do with my life when I get outta here. I don't just have to follow being in the streets for the rest of my life.

TBW: When you get out of here, do you think you can give up the streets?

J: I was never out there in the streets turf-banging, I was more focused on making money and getting high.

TBW: What's the difference between turf-banging and making money?

J: It's a difference where your mind is at. I don't sell dope. The ones who sell dope are most likely out there on the block all day, tryna make money selling dope to dope fiends, and so they around killas all day, that can influence them to get on they hype.

I was a thief and a robber. I can't excuse myself from that to this day. I ain't perfect. But the difference is, I was always robbin' people, but that's what kept me away from turf-banging. I got enough problems robbin' people that I don't know. I wasn't born into the beef, so, you feel me? I wasn't known as that (a turf-banger.) Turf bangers sell drugs.

Most people, you can't go to no block and sell dope to get your money, 'cause there's already people there makin' money, puttin' in work for their set. So if you just tryna be on the set sellin' dope, tryna make you some money and you not puttin' in work for the set—goin' to rivals, killin' rivals, ain't nobody feelin' you.

A lot of people family already in the beef, and so they children is expected to follow right along with it to keep the chain going, but my family ain't with it. My family is hard-working people. They got jobs and stuff. They do things the legal way, but it's not like they ain't got no problems, they do, but they try to do it the legal way.

TBW: What kind of jobs does your family have?

J: My pops is a mechanic. He does his legal work (work legally.)

TBW: How does your family respond to what you do in the streets?

J: They dealing with they problems, I gotta deal with mine. I go out there and rob people for money. I break into people's houses and cars; rob stores, hotels, gas stations.

TBW: By yourself?

J: I got crimies, but I ain't runnin' with them no more.

TBW: Now they're out there without you?

J: No, they're in jail, too. They're not dependable people. You can't depend on them for nothin'. That's how the game goes. Some people think they got love in the streets from their patnas, but, really, they against you, too.

TBW: So you can't trust them?

J: As soon as you come up with a large amount of money, they gonna turn their backs on you?

TBW: Why?

J: You gotta look at them as they robbers and thieves, too. As soon as you come up, they gonna turn their backs on you, too.

TBW: They're gonna take your money?

J: Either they gonna rob you or the police gonna offer them a deal and they'll take it and snitch you out.

TBW: Is that what happened to you?

J: Somethin' like that.

TBW: When you get out of here, what are you going to do?

J: I'm gonna go with my family. Spend my time with them, 'cause a lot of people fail to realize they gonna be here for you 'til the end.

TBW: So your family has supported you all this time?

J: Yes.

TBW: How does your being incarcerated affect your family?

J: They always welcome me with open arms, no matter what I've done. I know I've hurt them—me being in here. I've heard them say I have a lot of potential to be what I wanna be.

TBW: What do you think?

J: I feel that it's true, too. I'm always open-minded about new things, and one day I'll make up my mind what I want to pursue.

TBW: One time before you wrote that you wanted to buy houses, fix them up, and sell them.

J: Real estate.

TBW: Yeah, real estate. Is that still your plan?

J: Yeah. That's at the end of my life—becoming an entrepreneur.

TBW: What comes between now and then?

J: I haven't made that choice yet, to what I want to do career-wise.

TBW: That's okay. You're still just a kid. What else looks good to you?

J: I'm talking to one of the Ranch counselors about getting into martial arts.

TBW: Does he teach martial arts?

J: Yes.

TBW: What kind?

J: He teaches a few different kinds. He trains the counselors here—defense. He's pretty deep into it. He wants us to learn discipline. That's what martial arts is all about—discipline. Up here (at the Ranch) some of us don't like it—how hard he comes down on us, like he's really here for the money, but he really is trying to teach us something, so I asked him about martial arts. He said he really is gonna help me.

TBW: That's terrific, Jerry. Well, thank you for a beautiful interview. We've learned a lot about you. We wish you the best of luck now and when you're free again soon. Thank you so much.

—Jay Bandit LCRS

From The Beat: Solid interview. The whole time you've been down here at the Ranch you've pretty much been friendly with everyone but stayed to yourself. That's probably why you're almost home. Congratulations. We hope your optimism and strength will sustain you once you're free again, and keep you out of the game. You've spent enough of your young life locked up. We hope the old you does not surface it's ugly head, 'cause if it does, well, you know the outcome, or worse.

Ghost, Spirits, Angels, Reincarnation

I do believe in spirits. I just moved from my old house two months ago and my grandmother said when she used to lay in the bed while she was asleep her spirits would leave her body and another spirit would meet up with her spirit. One of them was a young African-American man around the age 21 to 25. He was trying to tell her he was shot.

He had been trying to have sex with my grandma. She was trying tell him no they can't have sex and just to rest his soul.

Another time she said that she saw another spirit. She couldn't see the face but she saw a figure of a man and she just lay there and prayed. She was telling him to leave, don't come back. It went to the kitchen, started slamming things around. My grandma was just saying, "Lord have mercy on this soul."

She says she think it was there because my mom was close to death and she said, "Misery love company." But once my mom got good and well, it never came around anymore. Yes I believe in spirits.

—Ebony GU

From The Beat: Why do you think these spirits were "haunting" your grandmother? Besides the stories that she told you, have you had any direct experiences with ghosts or spirits? What would you do if you met one?

I Believe In Ghost And Angels

I believe in ghosts and angels. I used to believe for a long while that there was a ghost in my aunt's house because a man was murdered in it. One night I was there alone and I heard somebody running up the basement. So now every time I spend a night at her house or just at her house at night, I leave all the lights on.

—Princes GU

From The Beat: That's pretty scary. Did your aunt live there when that murder happened? Did she ever see that ghost? If you came face to face with a ghost, what would you do?

Mama Love

I love mama to death do us apart. Man, can't nobody take me away from mama, not even the judge, 'cause if the judge send me to a group home I'm go run back to mama, ya heard me.

—B. Bezzy GU

From The Beat: Yeah, we heard you. And the judge heard you. And your PO heard you... So basically what you're saying is that if you go to a group home you'll run... right back here! Sometimes we have to sacrifice things in the short run (like being home with your mom) in order to get what we want in the long run (like being home with your mom...)



Today

Today is a rainy day
This is bullshhh
I can't wait
'Til summer comes

—Birdman LCRS

From The Beat: Hopefully by the time you read this all the rain has passed and we can get on with letting the sun shine in.

I Cry

Dear Mama,

I love you so much Mama. I pray every night when I go to sleep — every day and every night. And I cry every day and every night.

—Yesenia B4

From The Beat: We wish you could be back in the arms of your mother where you belong. When you get out of here, are you going to make any changes so that you don't give the system power to take you from those you love ever again?

Why?

Why I'm still here?
Why ma ninjas don't care?
Why the staff at YGC be doin' too much?

Why am I so freakin' bad?
Why can't I stop fighting?
Why am I in love?

Why they won't let me out of juvi?
Why can't I stop smoking?
Why they won't give me no grapes before I try to escape
Why, Why, Why, Why?

—B. Bezzy GU

From The Beat: Some of your questions are worth thinking seriously about (but others are just silly). Don't you know why they won't let you out? Don't you know why you're still here? If not, then you're writing a return ticket for yourself. We'd like you to take just those two questions and put your good brain to work coming up with some answers. We're looking forward to them.

Kicked Out Of My Groupy

W'at it do, Beat? This Young Drew. I just got kicked out of my groupy for smashing on somebody, and they took me out of there. Now I'm here.

-Young Drewski B1

From The Beat: So we see, Young Drewski. If you continue to smash on anyone for any reason — in juvy, in a group home, on the outs — you will have to accept the negative consequences. As you mature, we hope you can find ways to avoid beefs, and to solve your problems without getting physical about it.

Jail Made Me Change

Damn, man, jail is not coo'. I wish I had my freedom. Damn, but I don't. I can't blame nobody but myself. Damn, why did I do w'at I did?

Jail made me change the way I am now. My life is coo', but my jail is not coo'. 'cause I am trying to be coo' while I'm in here. While I'm in here, it's hard to keep yo' head up in here, 'cause you got to keep yo' mind up. You have to watch out for the stupid-ass kids that think they are hard.

-Man Man B1

From The Beat: How do kids that "think they are hard" act, and how do you avoid them? Is this the first time you had to come to jail (the hall) for what you've done? If not, then why is this time different from the others? Do you think you weren't ready for change before, but now you are? Why?

Not Ready To Get Out

To keep it real, I don't know if I can even make to see twenty-five, because once you get in it, you cannot get out of it. To keep it real, I don't even know if I'm ready to get out of it. I'm loving the life. I'm a youngsta, doing it real big.

-Money Earnin' Vernon

From The Beat: Vernon, you write that you're doin' it real big, but here you are back in juvy, going nuts, hating every minute of it. We don't call this piece keepin' it real at all. To keep it real, you absolutely can get out, but only if you want to. (We know so many people, older and deeper into it than you, who've decided that this is not what they want for their lives, so please don't try to play us with your excuses.) The one honest thing about this piece is your admission that you don't know if you want to get out or not. Without making that commitment, there's no way you can get out. So look inside yourself and decide if you love being a slave enough to keep doing what you do...

HATORADE

I believe that there is a lot of hate because the guy who said I tried to rob his son and said that I had a gun started cussing at me and started calling me all kinds of racist and profane names. He really wanted me to go to juvenile knowing that I wasn't at the crime scene. His son knew I wasn't there and tried to speak, but the father told him to shut up. The father is a hater because he wanted to see another innocent black brother to go to jail, which is me.

-Michael B2

From The Beat: Did the boy's father have something against you in particular, or do you think he just hates all young black men? If you didn't try to rob his son — and if the boy will say so in your case — then you really have nothing to worry about, even if the father is a hater.

Loyalty

You gonna be in jail or locked up; that's what comes with the 'hood, being loyal to the block you in or out. But once you're in you're in. But you could get out and when you're out, you're labeled automatically as untrue to the game. That's how it feels. Love, honor, respect, loyalty, drugs, sex — that's all that comes with the 'hood. That's how I feel.

-Lil' Sleepy B2

From The Beat: Love, respect, loyalty, honor, drugs and sex all come with the 'hood? Didn't you leave a few things out, Lil' Sleepy. What about dead time? Jail? Pain? Hurt? Death? Tears of your loved ones? There are two sides to this coin. You're living one of them now.

People Trying To Help Me

The love is my momma an' my family, an' people that's out there trying to help me, an' provide after school programs an' stuff.

-Corif B1

From The Beat: In what ways do people help you, Corif? What programs would you like to see your school and community provide for your homies and you? How do you return the love you get from your family?

I Believe In Angels

Me, I really don't believe in ghosts or spirits, but I do believe in angels. But all the other stuff I don't believe in, because I ain't never seen none of those other stuff. But if I do see anything of those things, I don't know what I would do.

-Ketzaales B1

From The Beat: So, does this mean that you have seen an angel? If so, can you tell us about that experience? If not, why do you believe in angels? Do you think you have a guardian angel? If so, what do you think your angel's advice would be to give you maximum protection for your life? If you were your own guardian angel, what would you advice yourself?

A Little Something

It seems like me and money are in love

When I really look at it

It seem it hate me

Most of the people I see

Do not want to listen

But always want to talk

My family always told me

To respect your elder

But the young people

Act like they're the old ones

-Smacks B4

From The Beat: Money has no heart, so it is not likely that money loves you in return. Don't worry about people who do nothing but talk because by being a listener you will be able to learn. The more you listen, the more you will realize that big-mouth people usually aren't talking about much. The same young people who act like they are "elders" deserving of respect will be the first to denounce young people — thirty years from now when they truly are the "elders" and the young don't respect them...

We Gots Something

Fools be hatin', that's why beef be going on. Like where I'm from, we all about our chalupeas (money). Cats be hatin' on us because we gots something and they don't got nothing. I'm out.

-Money Earnin' Vernon B1

From The Beat: So they hate on you for what you have... which means to us that they stopped hating on you now, 'cause all you have is someone else's dirty draw's, a bunch of strangers telling you what to do every minute of the day, and a bunch of boys to shower with. Yeah, we can see why such riches would make you the object of everyone's envy... Time to you're your eyes and smell the coffee...

They Know You' Go' Run

I hate people who hate on the next man. This low is not fair. When they send you to out-of-home placement, they know you go' run, but they send you anyway. When you run, they send you further.

-Andre B1

From The Beat: No, they don't know you're going to run when they send you to an out-of-home placement, because most young people don't run. So it's a little bit of childish thinking to put the blame on them for the consequences of your choice to run. You made that decision; you pay the price! The out-of-home placement is a test to see whether you are mature enough to live in freedom. By running, you show them that you aren't...

I've Learned From Stuff I Did In The Past

Well, me, I'm not in no game. I'm from the projects and I love where I live. But I know when not to do something and when to do something. But, me, I'm not getting out the game, but I'm expecting to do something with my life. But I'm not tryin' to do something really bad for a while, because I learn my lesson from some other stuff I've did in the past. Hopefully, I am not going to do the same thing again.

-Ketzaales B1

From The Beat: You write that "I'm not in no game," but then you write that you're not "getting out the game," so what's up with that? What are the lessons you've learned from past mistakes, and how will you apply those lessons to your future? What plans do you have for your life? Just hoping not to do the same as in the past is not enough. You have to make a clear decision, and then stick to it.

When I Get Home

The game will stop when I get out of YGC. I got caught on the block and now I'm doing time for it, but if I was at home, I wouldn't never be in jail.

-Young Jimmy B2

From The Beat: So we know what you're not going to do when you get out — hang out on the block. But what are you going to do? Go to school? Do more activities with your family? Stay away from temptations?

Love God

When I be on the outs, ninjas don't be showin' me no love. But on some real shhh, I don't expect it because that's the world we live in today. Only person you want to love you is yourself and the man upstairs, God.

Love yourself and be true to the game. Know what's right and don't be afraid to say no to your so-called friends. Do what's right for yourself. When you die you die alone in your own casket — nobody with you to keep your head up and stay real to the game.

-Young Reese B2

From The Beat: You don't show love to your family? And the those that love you? We think you're exactly right about having the strength to stand up for yourself, to say no to your friends when they want to lead you toward trouble, and to do what's in your own best interest. But we don't think you go through life alone, even if that's the way you die. Reaching out to trustworthy people is important throughout your life.

'Haterism'

My topic today is about haterism because it's a lot of people who be hatin' on people 'cause they ain't got what you got. So they go do whatever they can do to bring you down 'cause they want you to scoot down to they level.

-Young Jeff B2

From The Beat: We've noticed some of what you're talking about. We see it a lot when a young man or woman tries to improve him or herself by reading or studying or taking school seriously. Then a lot of other young people make fun of him or her because they're not going to school and they're jealous. Have you ever done that?

It's A Cycle

Wusup Beat? This yo' boy Sharky. Yeah, people always hatin' on someone. I ain't gone lie, I hate on certain individuals at times. It just comes to show you it's a cycle; what goes around comes around.

This world is messed up, but how would we know there is: good without the bad; joy without the pain; God without the devil; love without the hate? And the list keeps going, feel me?

To all who is doing time and trapped behind bars, keep ya head up. All dates come around! Ya heard me!

-Sharky B2

From The Beat: Yeah, we heard you Sharky, but we wish you could hear yourself! If it's all a cycle, and what goes around comes around, are you making the kinds of choices that will move you forward or hold you back? What kinds of choices are you planning to make when your date comes around?

My Family

My family to me is the most important thing in the world. Without my family I ain't nothing. When I'm not with my family I feel like I am no one, and when I see and talk to my family I feel like I'm something. When they sad I'm sad, and if they happy I'm happy. 'Cause when you think about it your family is the only thing that's going to be there for you at the end. 'Cause your family is always gonna love you and you should love them back 'cause they always gonna be there.

-Enrique B4

From The Beat: It's good to see that you appreciate the family support that you are fortunate to have as strength to help you pull through like. Can you imaging going through life without any family at all? So, how can you repay this love? What do those who love you most want for you in this life? How can you give them the gift they want the most — you, at home with them?

The Game

Man, the 'hood know I'm a straight ghost because you can't see me. I'm a young G getting money. By the way The Beat, my name is M Beezy, but I'm down right now.

I'm about to go to this program for 18 months. I see it as 18 months to change my life in ways. But the part about the street life is when a person tries to get a person when the other person is trying to get his life right. So until the day I'm ready to change, I'm on the block out here, so find me.

-M Beezy B4

From The Beat: Is that program you're about to do on the block? So why are you already making your plans to go back to where you keep getting in trouble, when you haven't even begun your program yet? Now is the time to find the ways that will help you make the changes you need to make, even if you only change slowly. Learn as much about as much as you can in the meantime.

Running Right Into The Box

What Up Beat? It's ya boy Vinny. Yeah, I'm back. They got me. I was posted on the block like always, the boys dipped up and the rest is history. But I'm hella mad I ran from the Ranch, 'cause I was thinking the streets was crackin'.

Man, I'm gone keep it real, the streets dead and weak as ever. This might sound stupid, but the Ranch crackin' way harder than the streets. Ain't nobody out there. It's just hella cameras on every block, so it always feel like the police watchin' you. I'm tellin' everybody, if you locked up, don't run, just knock that shhh out. 'Cause if you run, trust me, you running to nothin'. Ain't nothing out there. It's just the same ninjas and breezies doing the same shhh. So be cool. Stay up I'm out holla back.

-Vinny B5

From The Beat: Why do we always believe the grass is greener on the other side of the fence? There is nothing out there other than the same old "Dirt" that has been there way before your time. So now that you know what not to do (at least we hope you know), have you decided what to do? It's time to make a real plan for your future, Vinny. By now you should have figured out that if you don't have a plan, the system will make one for you...

I Love You Pops

You were the greatest warrior I've ever known. I grew up without a dad, so you filled in the spot of a father figure. You were not only the greatest street warrior but also a life warrior. Although you loved our 'hood, you still took care of business. You handled our responsibilities.

You had two kids and loved them dearly. You taught me to be responsible even with my kid. Now that you're gone I feel lost. I feel empty. I can't turn to anyone to help me out. But deep down inside I know you're still with me and you're watching over me. I love you pops and I'll miss you dearly.

-Baby Chino B4

From The Beat: Some people have such a special place in our lives that when they're gone, we never stop missing them. We're sorry to hear about the passing of a role model who you hold in such high regards. There are many people with a spirit strong as Chino's so be sure to keep a open mind. Plus, now that you've been schooled by someone as responsible as Chino, you can now be the responsible elder for those young boys and girls who look up to you.

Where's The Love

I ain't got no love for nobody who ain't in my circle, but I got love for my people who shows me respect that is not in my circle. To get respect you have to give respect. But I love the block, so if a person gone find me, then come find it. But I got love ones around everywhere, and that's where the love is at.

-M Beezy B4

From The Beat: Loving the block hasn't been very kind to you over the years, has it MB? What's the block doing for you now? Don't fool yourself into thinking that your block is full of nothing but love for you when haters lurk around every corner of your block.

Love?

It ain't no love, 'specially when you're from the other side. Me and my little bra was at the shop and got robbed, but you know what goes around comes around. But it came around the wrong way. Me and my thugs don't hate on anybody 'cause where I'm from we eat, and if you're doing shady stuff it's best you keep to yourself 'cause it's always somebody that's hating on you.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: What goes around does come around. That's karma. Just because others play with life in a shady way doesn't mean that you have to do the same thing. You say there ain't no love, but do you love yourself? If not, why not?

Played

Man, I'm mad because I'm still locked up in YGC and my PO tried to play me when I went to court. I've been locked up in YGC for a year.

-Fat T B5

From The Beat: In what way did your PO try to play you? What's the solution to this problem? What's your contribution to it?

All The Homies

Separate the homies from the phonies

Shhh is getting crazy

Get on your feet stop being lazy

This road is rough and bumpy, homie

Have you ever felt so lonely?

RIP to all

-Sharky B2

From The Beat: We took out your reference to "lock and load" Sharky, because it showed us how little you've learned from the deaths of your friends. They are gone, forever, because of "lock and load." If you're focusing on revenge instead of getting your life together, the system is licking its greedy lips in anticipation of the time you'll be spending inside...

Ready To Get Ready

I going to keep it real. I don't know if I ready to get out the game, but I got to get ready to take a step close to that success.

-Delvon B1

From The Beat: As long as you keep putting off that necessary decision to change, you'll keep finding reasons to do the same old thing — and you'll keep paying the same old price. The same one

Ghost? Spirits? Angels?

When I was lil', I always used to go shopping wit' my moms down on Mission. I always used to see a lady, all in white, her skin all white. Now that I think of it, that's some scary shhh, feel me?

-Walter B4

From The Beat: Were you scared at the time? Did you ever tell your mother? What did she say? Have you had any similar experiences since then? Who do you think it was?

Ghosts Are Real

Personally, I think ghosts are real, I don't know why, but I think that their presence is around. If I was to ever get a ghost encounter I probably get spooked an' try to fight it physically or I'll tell it to "Kick rocks, you punk rock breezy."

Ghosts are on earth because they got unfinished business. I would stay on earth to finish it.

-Cito B4

From The Beat: Why would you want to fight a friendly ghost? Who do you think would win a battle like that? Have you ever seen a spirit or ghost? Do you want to?

Scared To Fight

It's death in the streets of San Francisco
Ninjas ride around town bustin' they pistols
Everybody in the City thinkin' they sick dough

They the ninjas that ain't shhh, yo

Scared to get that ass whipped so

Ninjas bustin' they guns

What happen back then

When ninjas used to box 'em fun

One on one

I be ready to whoop yo' ass

While you pumpin' ya gums

Step to me I leave you on yo' ass

And not on yo' feet

You ain't ready to throw

'Cause you all know

I leave yo' ass on the flow wit' two black eyes and broken nose

Like I told you bro

You can neva mess with this young soja bro

-Jay B4

From The Beat: We can see where you are coming from. Nowadays, almost everyone turns to a fire arm to resolve conflict. Weather it's fists or hollow tips, violence will not resolve anything. Instead, it will only make the problem grow into something bigger. While we admire you for not resorting to weapons to solve your problems, you should prepare yourself to fight future battles with your head instead of your fists. The system, in particular, is prepared for force. What they find hard to deal with is brains. Use them!

Where's The Love?

It is a dog-eat-dog world out there. It's either you get up and get it, or somebody else will because it ain't going to come to you.

-JB

From The Beat: Yeah, we can see where it got you to "get up and get it." This is what you brought to yourself, living like a slave!

Haters

What's really good Beat? Let me holla atcha about these haters... Man, there's so many ninjas and breezes hating on me when they see me with some new Bauds, Jordans, or see me shining with my fresh-ass grill. Man, all I can say to you hatas is keep coo' and step ya money game up, yadda!

-Young Sean Doe B2

From The Beat: Isn't the whole point of wearing the latest styles and showing a golden grill to attract attention? Can you complain if some of that attention is negative? Are you planning to "step ya money game up" when you get out? Just how do you plan to do that, without also planning a return trip here?

Love

Love is a word that a lot of people say
Most people don't even know what love is
Love makes people feel good

When I don't know someone for long time

And they tell me they love me, I be thinkin' they fulla shhh
You shouldn't tell girls you love them if you don't know what that mean

They might take it the wrong way

Sometimes when a girl says she will die for you she means it
So think before you use that four letter word L-O-V-E

-Gbb B2

From The Beat: We admire you for this advice, QBB, especially if you live by it. We know too many men (young and old) who think it's all right to lie to females about love so they can get what they want, and never give a thought to the bruises and aches they've left on her heart. Have you ever used the word in that way? Have you also used it and meant it?

I'll Quite When I'm Feeling It

I think the time for me to quit the game is when I feel its time for me to quit the game. I'm going to quit the game when I flip the game. To me I feel I am the game. And me, I think I maybe never change till thangs is going my way.

-Art Cash B4

From The Beat: Sorry to tell you this, but you will never remain to same. Change is a part of life. If you are the game, then when you're gone, we guess the game will also be gone, right? Is being locked up a part of the game? We ask you that because we worry that if you wait till things are going your way, you'll be doing a lot of that waiting from behind four walls — if not here, then in worst places down the road.

Limited Love

People nowadays only show love to they 'hood and their family.

-Delvon B1

From The Beat: Is this true of everybody, Delvon? Do you know anyone who shows love to total strangers? In what ways?

Quitting The Game

Man, this yo boy J-Gutta coming straight from B5. I don't think death or jail will make me quit the so-called game. And why do they call it a game? This shhh ain't no game. This is life. Ninjas out there dying, and y'all talking about getting out the game.

Even if somebody did want to get out they probably could stop claiming, but there is no stopping the ninjas you had beef from putting yo' head on flat like a Firestone tire. But then again ninjas love the hood, like me. I hug the hood like huggies diapers hugs a baby's bottom.

Well Beat, I gotta kick rocks to the room. Two thumbs up town. Love ya Beat. See ya next week.

-J-Gutta

From The Beat: You're right, jail won't stop you because everything that is on the streets is alive and healthy within jail. Death, on the other hand, will put you to rest for sure. Death stops everything! The simple solution is this: you make the bed that you sleep in. It's up to you where you want to lay your head — at home, in the hall, or underground...

Ghosts

I remember it was like a week after ma uncle's death, and I woke up like at 12:00 midnight. I was gonna smoke a cig and I just froze at the sight of my uncle outside smokin'.

-Boxer B2

From The Beat: Damn! Were you scared? Is it possible that you were still dreaming and only thinking you were awake? Or could it be that you loved and missed him so much that you just "had to" see him? Did he say anything or show any indication of seeing you?

In Tha Game

I'm in the game

In it wit' two feet,

I came up in it

Shhh don't stop, like clock work.

Once in it, ain't no getting out.

-Cubba B4

From The Beat: Why live within a one-track mind in a world where the sky is the limit. Actually, it's not the sky that limits you, it's your own lack of imagination and recognition of possibilities. Don't limit yourself. You are 100% wrong about not being able to get out. Others before you (in deeper and longer) have, so we hope you add a little brain to those two feet that are in it...

Change

Change? Yeah, I think about change all the time. But for some reason, I just never do it. Even though I have changed in a lot of ways, but not in the way I want.

-Mighty Mouse B4

From The Beat: How do you want to change that you haven't been able to? What do you think is holding you back? The one thing we're certain about is that change will come. If you don't make it, someone else will make it for you...

Book Of Life

My life is a book —

Pages torn

Pages ripped

Pages missing

You can read my book

But not the full story

It has no end

And no beginning

My book is tattered

My book is nearly destroyed

My book is hidden away

On a shelf forever to stay

But for how long

Or should it remain

-Beezy B5

From The Beat: Some things can be kept on the shelf and kept personal. By the same token, it wouldn't hurt at all to share your life experiences with others who may not understand life as well as you do. Plus, we'd like to know...

Why I'm Grimey

I got my nickname from a group of boys. The reason they call me Baby Grimey is because I'm the youngest out the whole click, and I'm the grimeiest ninja in the whole squad. If my grimey ninjas tell me to get 'em, I gotta get 'em. I ain't saying I'm the sickest ninja out here but man, I don't fear shh.

My heart turned cold after my fifth birthday, when my lil' bra got killed. So now I'm trying to make it to the top knockin' any ninja off that disrespect my block or my click. Man this young ninja trigga happy, ready for beef any day a ninja want it with my side, ya heard me?

So when you hear a ninja say go go bo you better act like flash and do a hundred yard dash 'cause we takin' everything you got. Man, we gotta come in first 'cause we can't come in last.

-Baby Grimey B5

From The Beat: It's strange that you find a sense of pride in following grimy individuals who show no value for life or anything else — other than upholding the same grimy mentality that your little brother fell victim to. There were probably all kinds of things that caused your heart to go cold long before your brother passed, so why not think about some of those issues while you've got the time. You can threaten all you want about how grimy you and your partners are, how ready to throw down you are, and how the rest of us better watch out for you. But all we see is a prisoner to a system that keeps you locked up like a slave. All we see is someone willing to do what he's told — whether it's by your "grimeys" or by the staff that controls your every move...

Ghosts? Spirits? Angels?

I believe in spirits, because I feel that I have my homies and family watchin' over me.

-Delvon B1

From The Beat: What does it mean to have these lost loved ones watching over you? Do they protect you? In what ways? What would they say about you being in the hall, and about how to stay out?

Where's The Love?

I love my family and my family loves me. I also loves my block and my block loves me. I'll do anything for my family and my block. I'll ride or die for both of them till the wheels fall off.

-Wes B5

From The Beat: We doubt very much if your family would be thrilled to have you die for them. They want you alive, not dead. Which is why you can't love both your family and the block. Loving the block puts tears in your mother's eyes, and pain in her heart. How is that showing your love? We have a big fear for you, Wes, that unless you figure a way off the block, somewhere down the line you'll be writing sad poems from behind thick walls about how much you love your family — the ones you left behind

Freedom

Free at last. Hey Beat, this ya boy Little Cousin in from B5 coming at you for the last time. Freedom is only two days away and I am ready to go because it's time to move on from here so I can get to know the real world. But it's also time for me to go, and I am not talking about life but I am going to college.

-Little Cousin B5

From The Beat: Well, Maurice, we've been with you for a long time now, so we agree that it's time for you to move on! Good luck in your grouper.

When To Stop

To tell you the truth, shhh, I don't even know when I'm going to stop what I'm doing.

-Yung Geza B1

From The Beat: We can clearly see that you are stopped right now, Yung Geza, whether you want to be or not. Our point is this: Unless you decide to make that decision, someone else will be making it for you.

Phone Tap

What up, Beat readers? Dis tha Princess. I just found out today from my PO that the last time I was in here, the detectives that was working on my case had put a wire on my cell phone and was trying to use my phone conversation to lead them to something. But I don't even use that phone for conversations that go that far. That's why I got my ghetto. So that's why hey knew what I was up to that day I got arrested.

My PO got all my conversations in her office and she might bring that to court. Ain't that some shhh? I also learned that I might be getting out of here soon. I been here for way too long so it's my time to leave.

-Princess GU

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the expression: "What you do in the dark comes out in the light?" That's what those shady phone calls represent. We don't like the idea of the government tapping our telephones, but if you weren't planning dirt, then nothing you said would have been used against you. We hope you do get out of here real soon, but we have to remind you that getting out of here is really the easiest part of the whole process. It's staying out that requires a little effort on your part. Are you up to that effort?

Back To The 'Hood

What's up with The Beat? This is young hitta doing shhh but going back to that little-ass cell. I cannot wait to go home. Damn! Everything just went wrong. But now that going to stop because they say my block is hot. I just cannot wait to escape. But it all good because soon I be back to the 'hood.

-Young Hitta GU

From The Beat: No, it's not all good. Going back to the place where you get in trouble with the law cannot be described as "all good." In fact, if you keep doing what pulls you from home and puts you in a cage, that's all bad! We wonder if that "little-ass cell" you're talking about is here in YGC, or a part of your mind, a way of thinking. If there was ever a time to "think out of the box," this is it.

Top Of The Game

I don't know what's going to make me stop, but I already got caught selling (rocks). This is my first time I got caught up. I been doing this for two years and I thought I was hella slick doing this, but this doesn't bring me just money, but worries. Worries about me getting in YGC and not being able to see my sister.

The thing that would stop me from being in the game is if someone goes and does something to my baby sisters. Haters don't like me 'cause I'm on top of the game. But right now, I ain't going to stop 'cause I like hanging out with my peoples and being on top of the game.

-Lil' One GU

From The Beat: We think you've been standing on your head, Lil' One. This isn't "being on top of the game," this is being on the bottom! Your "game" includes wearing old clothes that others have worn, showering only with females, listening to strangers tell you

Not Gonna Quit The Game

I wouldn't want to quit the game any time soon. I like bein' on the block, bein' out hella late, drinkin'. Sometimes I'm havin' such a coo' time, I don't even go home. I wouldn't wanna give that up any time soon.

-Lil' Nicoya GU

From The Beat: Correct us if we're wrong, but it appears to us that you have given it up. Or, to be real, you've been forced to give it up in exchange for a cell, a bunch of other females to shower with, underwear worn by hundreds of girls before you, and people you don't know telling you when to sleep, to eat, to talk, to play, etc. You may not want to give up the game, but the system isn't going to give up its game either. So enjoy yourself out there drinking and smoking — and prepare yourself for a lot more time spent in cages reminiscing about the block. Just like now.

Group Homes

I think group homes are dumb. I think group homes don't help nobody. I rather do my time in the halls.

-Francisco B4

From The Beat: No program can help someone unless that someone wants the help. Do you get help in the halls, or is it just easier than a program? What specifically do you think is dumb about group homes? Some people go to a group home and learn what they need to so they can live in freedom. Others never learn. Which are you?

Love

What would it take
To make
Me give up the game
Money, power, fame
None of the above
I would only give up
The game for love

-Beezy B5

From The Beat: What about love for yourself? If you loved yourself, could you do the things that lead you to lose your freedom? Have you been in love? If so, why didn't you give up the game then? How do you define love? How do you define the game? that your Mom would love to see you doing.

What It Do?

What it do? It's ya boy, Squeak, still here at this can ass Ranch. I will be touching down in a few, in about seventy to seventy-five days. So you know how that goes, 'cause when I touch down in that few, it gonna be a rap, like Mary J. Blidge would say! So, man, I just had to stop by and holla at The Beat.

Squeak gotta kick rocks out of here. SQ in the buildin', so you know how that go!

-Squeak LCRS

From The Beat: Squeak, we're happy that you're doing so well in your Ranch program, and that you'll be going home soon. What's the game plan? A job at The Beat? Is that what you're saying? Hope so. Keep us posted.

Where's The Love?

The love for me
It's on my house
Wit' my family
My baby boy
And tha people
That love me
My homeboys
And my homeboy loves me too.

-Slow Pain B5

From The Beat: We hope you also have love for yourself. We also hope you figure out which is more important to you, the love of family or the love of your homies. Sometimes, those two loyalties will come into conflict, and then you'll have to make some hard choices.

Ghosts? Spirits? Angels?

I don't believe because I ain't never seen it and I can't believe unless I see wit' my own eyes.

-JB B2

From The Beat: We appreciate you trying to touch a little on each topic. However, we would really like you to try and focus on one single topic and write more on it, rather than a couple of sentences for each topic.

Ghost? Spirits? Angels?

For my opinion there's a heaven and a God. So yes, I do believe in angels. I truly believe that God watches over all. And I also believe that there are angels sent from above. For example, coincidences are a lesson to be learned, and deja vu as well. Know what I'm talking about?

-Chill Will B5

From The Beat: Well, we know what coincidences and déjà vu are, but how are they lessons to be learned? The unknown as something that we should keep an open mind about, always searching for the truth behind the things that cause us to wonder...

Time To Quit The Game

Ha, ha, ha, ya blew it with this topic. It's crazy, though, 'cause I'm around some dropouts from my rivals and from my side. It's funny to see fools that can't stand bein' locked up and it's not that they are soft and I'm hard, it's just that they are weak as hell and I'm not. People better start realizing before they get into a gang and what they are gettin' their self into, 'cause you can't just say, "Forget it, I'm gettin' out big."

No, no, son, it's not like that. It's either you do some dirt so you won't have to be on the block, and the other choice, it's get the hell up from the 'hood and not get yourself bein' seen by fools from your gang, 'cause if you do, it's a rap. So, right now, I'm a tell ya when I'm a get out the game... Never. And if I make it to sixty years old, I'm a still be with my flag, 'cause I'm not in a gang, the gang is in me.

-Enzo LCRS

From The Beat: We had to cut a bit of your foolish piece, yes foolish thinking to say the least. Well homeboy if you are so down, then prepare yourself for cell living, 'cause in time that's where you'll be, kicking your self in the ass in a tiny room alone with only your thoughts, forgotten by many, if your lucky a few will still be in your corner, but those few will in time forget about you. Do you know how many men and women in prison are alone wishing for better days? You still have a chance! Youngster, we wish you'd wake up and realize the life you are living is a dead end. Read The BWO pages of this Beat, see what some of our elders have to say about the life in prison, 'cause your thinking is putting you on that road.

What It Is?

For all the people that's in the so-called game, this is for you: I don't know why you in it, 'cause there is no chance you gon' win.

-Dre LCRS

From The Beat: Why do you write that there is no chance that anyone playing the game will win? Take it further! How did you learn this? What have you seen?

Tired Of Running The Streets

I've been running the streets since I was 12 years old. When I got in the system, I was not even 15. I've been coming in and out of YGC several times; I'm 15 years old now and I'm still comin' back here.

It's always because I have a bench warrant. I'm always gettin' back on the run when I get out. But now I'm really getting tired of my bullshhh and being the little jail bird that I am, so that's why when I get out of here I'm gonna be on my shhh and work on my way to getting out the system. Therefore I won't be in here anymore or be out there worrying about a warrant.

One time I had a miscarriage and I couldn't even give General Hospital my real name 'cause of a warrant. General do be runnin' yo' name. Fo' now I'm 'bouta get my shhh straight and get off the streets. In a year or two I ain't finna be in the system no mo'! Now! How you like them sour apples?

-Lil' Ma GU

From The Beat: Well, since you ask how we like it, we can tell you we liked everything until we got to the very end. What do you mean "in a year or two" you'll be finished with the system? Why are you putting off your decision to change your ways? The one thing we know is that you can't live two lives: either you give up the one that leads you here, or you'll be spending more time in more lock-ups, and some of them much, much worse than where you are now. It seems particularly foolish to allow the system to take you from your loved ones because you have warrants — 100% within your power to avoid! Come on now, Lil' Ma. It's time.

Out Of The Game

I been quite the game. I'm trying to get further fast. I got my life set out so I'ma get further.

-Hyphy

From The Beat: This is a pretty short piece without much information in it, Hyphy. We're glad you quit the game, but what do you mean when you say you got your "life set out"? Can you give us a few details in how you see your life going?

Where's The Love

So the topic is about hatin'. There's many people I hate, but there's one person I may say I hate, but she is everything to me. That person will drop everything if I call for her. she loves me with all of her heart. We have been through so much together, and she still loves me.

Last year I stole her ATM card and jacked almost \$1,000 from her. when she learned about it, I was yacked out of my mind and I left. Couple days later, I crashed at my cousin's house. The next morning she was moving my stuff and found my piece and a case of yayho. Long story short, I'm in Walden House PSK now.

When I get out, I'm going to live up to her expectations. I'm going to do it right for one certain person is my mom. Mom, I love you.

-Kalisha

From The Beat: Well, we were confused at first, because you said "there's one person I may say I hate but she is everything to me." And then you wrote how you have done your mom, even when she stood by you. So we don't think this is a person you hate; this is a person you dearly love. You're lucky to have her in your corner, and we admire you for wanting to meet her expectations for you. But what are your expectations for yourself? Can you meet them?

Pimp Your Ride

I would pimp a Denali, put a nice stereo and DVD players and TV screens.

-Sara

From The Beat: Okay, Sara, you've heard our repeated request: Write on one topic and write more!

I thought you weren't going to live, your hands were so cold and the look on your face looked like you were trying to fight it.

Just Woke Up

See, I loved you and I wanted you to stop, but you never did. Every time I went away from you for more than one day, you would overdose. I'd come back, see your mother crying while there was an ambulance in front of your house. For a while, I'd sit by your side thinking, "Is she going to live?" I thought you weren't going to live, your hands were so cold and the look on your face looked like you were trying to fight it.

I opened my mouth and said I loved you. Two days later, you were back doing the same thing. So I realized that my best friend ain't never going to change. But I wish she had, 'cause to this day, I wonder is she still alive. But I know all my prayers will go to her 'cause she is the love of my life.

-B-Eye

From The Beat: We see this as a continuation of your earlier piece "Tough Love." We hope your best friend finds the strength to live, because all of her energies now are working against her own life. The one thing you can't be sure of, though, is that she won't change. Nobody can know the future. It may look like she'll never change because she came so close to death but went right back and did the same thing. But something could happen to wake her up just like you are now awake. Never give up hope.

My Past

So I don't have nothin' to say about these topics, but I do have some stuff to say about my past couple of days. I've been so unhappy and icky feeling for days. I was mean to my parents last night. I gave my mom hella dirty ol' looks, and I was tellin' my dad that he is nothing to me. I feel soooo icky and stupid for that 'cause what I was trying to do was make them feel bad just like me.

So I wish I could apologize to them. I would tell them when I get home I will always be good to them.

-Merrily

From The Beat: You say you wish you could apologize to your parents, but we think you just did! We hope you show them this piece so they will know how you really feel. Sometimes, we all say things or do things to our parents that we immediately regret. It's probably because we know they will love us no matter how snide and foolish we can be. We're sure they know you love them, but we're also sure they'd like to see how sorry you are.

My Best

Friend's Ghost

My best friend's spirit is in my house. She's not there to hurt no one. She's there to protect me.

-Sara

From The Beat: You could have written so much more about this, Sara, and next time we want you to. What happened to your best friend? Do you actually see her ghost at your house? How do you know her spirit lives there? And how do you know she's there to protect you. Why didn't she protect you from coming here?



Tough Love

Me and my friend were like two feet apart. But in my heart, we're five miles apart. I love her and miss her, but she is not the same. I know deep in her heart she is the same, but now every time I see her, it sickens me.

Just the way she looks, you think, "What happened to her over these years?" She's so skinny and all cut up. It scares me sometimes what she does to herself.

Most of the time I'm in my house having nightmares about what she is going to do next. I know I can't do anything to help her. but I still try all the time. My love for her will never die, no matter what she look like or how she feels for me.

-B-Eye

From The Beat: This is a sad piece. We have to assume that your friend has not found a way to break her addiction, and so is driving herself into the ground. We hope you can provide the inspiration your friend needs to put her priorities straight, and save herself. But keep your eyes on the prize, which is your own sobriety and preparation for life on the outs. You can't help anyone if you do not help yourself first.

Trapped

I feel trapped when I'm using and when I know I've done something to put myself in a situation to be in trouble... 'cause I also feel rapped when I'm in trouble.

-Sara

From The Beat: Again, we'd like more information in what you write. Please, next time take just one topic and write more details about it than just the single sentence you give us here! For example, you could have told us in this piece why you do things that put you in trouble when the result is feeling trapped.

Describing Myself

I think that the best thing that defines me is my independence. Also, I'm very caring and I have a lot of self-esteem.

-Sara

From The Beat: The trouble with writing about all three topics instead of just the one we'd like you to write about is that you give us pieces of one or two sentences, and that is not enough for us to know you. If independence and self-esteem describe you, can you give us examples of both?

This Is The News

This is the news
And you can live yo' life how you choose
You see this life is like a game
Some people win and some lose
I think the president is smoking weed busting this beat
Making a living off our misery
This is the news!

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: We'd like you to add a few details to this fine poem. For example, what do you think the president could or should do to reduce your misery? How is he making a living off you? When you say, "some people win and some people lose," what determines winning and what determines losing? What can you do to make sure you are a winner and not a loser?

Person's Life

This is the life of a person that doesn't care about their life. They just want to give up everything they want to have. They say it's bad to smoke a bit of weed; it would mess up the brain, and you might drop out of school or even maybe get kicked out. You won't find a good job. Even they won't accept a drug addict.

-Weasel

From The Beat: Do you mean that a person who to jail doesn't care about his life? We don't know. Sometimes things happen and mistakes are made even by people who do care about their lives. But we think you're absolutely right about drugs.

Who Am I

I am a young female that has big dreams. I want to make a difference in the world and show my friends and family that I can make it in life. I don't want to be known as someone who didn't make the right choices. I want to be different and be my own person.

I tell myself every day that I was born an individual and I don't want to die a copy. I am a young female who has grew up with a lot of violence and drugs in my life. I've been through many hard times but God has got me through each, and every one of those hard times. I am a young female who doesn't like drama because drama can lead to getting' in a fight or even possibly getting' shot.

People look at me and say, "Oh she hecka weak!" but you know what I say? Forget them because I ain't gotta prove nothin' to nobody. Yes, people talk about me every day, but I now know how to ignore that negative energy, just by not associating with them because they're just bad influences on ma life. People may talk their shhh, but as I said before forget them. Until next time rouge. Gone.....

-Bay Chick

From The Beat: Well, when we look at you now we will bring a new respect for your ability to express yourself clearly and forcefully! You are very wise to see the negative for what it is: an attempt to derail your determination. It is clear what you want to avoid in your future, but what do you want to embrace? What are your dreams?

A Follower

A brother that accepts a blunt or anything that is a drug, you will be the leader of your younger brother that would be a follower of taking some drugs as well. And that ain't right because that would ruin all off our lives' we have.

-Weasel

From The Beat: Well put, Weasel. Sometimes we tell people, "Don't do anything you wouldn't want your little brother or little sister see you doing," because you're right. Older brothers and sisters are role models for their younger siblings who follow what they do, not what they say.

To Be A Soccer Player

Hi! I'm Victor. My favorite sport is soccer I am a middle fielder I am almost 16 years old. I have a bro that is 24 years old. He is a professional soccer player. He play in the soccer team of Barcelona. His name is Ronaldinho Guacho. When I get my 18 years, I want to be a professional soccer player like my bro Ronaldinho Guacho.

-Victor

From The Beat: What will it take for you to become a professional soccer player? We know you will have to finish school, but do you also want to go to college? What would you like to study?

Jail

Behind bars with no way out
You wanna scream, you wanna shout
You lose your freedom
It's what you need
Serving time for this one bad deed
You cry yourself to sleep
With no way out
You sink deeper and deeper into the deep.

Jail is one place you don't want to go. What you do reflects on your past and changes the future. When you're in jail you see things you don't want to. You feel alone and distant. If you're in jail, it's based on your own decision. People in jail miss a lot of time. Jail eats your time slowly, and you'll never get that time back.

If you go to jail just serve your time and you might get out early. You have many ways to go. Make your own decision. No one can tell you what to do with your life. When trying to make a decision stop and think. Don't make the wrong one because your whole life depends on it.

-Lizzy

From The Beat: How did you get so wise at so young an age, Lizzy? Do you know people in jail? What do you think the worst thing about being locked up would be? Since you write so well, we wonder if you want to be a writer when you get out of school? What are your interests? What do you want to study in college? What do you want to be when you finish school?

Don't Go To Jail

I think da way a person would lead him/herself to jail is by doin' somethin' you ain't got no business doin'. Dat's what I'll think someone would get themselves is by killin' someone, robbin' a bank and kidnappin'.

I think some people in jail, are homosexual, bisexual, and lesbians. I know that because I seen it and I know. My brothers go to jail all day and dey tell me a lil' bit of stuff 'bout what go on in jail. I think jail is like a big boot camp. It's only for adults though. Dat's a place I wouldn't want to be.

-Princess

From The Beat: Why do your brothers go to jail so often? We'd like to know your definition of a boot camp, so we can understand what you mean when you compare jail to one. We know a lot of people who thought they could act like children even after they should have known better, and they got caught up and found themselves in jail. They had to become like adults very quickly. Don't be one of those young people who think they can play around the edges of a fire without getting burned.

Scared Of Jail

I have a uncle that was in jail for a year but they got him out by paying. He got in jail because he passed a red light and then tried to outrun him. Then he got caught and they took his car away. After my uncle came back he got his car back and he was free.

I think jail is like dark and there is some gay people because they are there for a long time and they miss women. If I was in jail I would be tough but first I'll be scared because I don't know that place that I am in. But then I won't be scared.

-Javier

From The Beat: You know, Javier, we hope you never stop being scared of jail! It's not a place for any human being to get used to. Use your uncle's experience to keep yourself out!

Who Am I

Well I'm go to tell you about myself. The first thing is my name, Oscar. Some people like to call me Kueet Kueet. I got the nickname from my sis' friend. I'm ok to have that nickname. Some girl like my nickname, but some want to change it.

Now I'm gone to tell you 'bout my family. My family is small. I have one bro and two sis. I live with my mom and dad. One of my best qualities is football. I like math. That is my best subject in school. I really enjoy it. I like the school teacher, and I like some girl in school because they are hecka fine! That is something 'bout myself.

-Oscar

From The Beat: This is really good, Oscar. You have told us some things about you that give us a better picture of who you are. What does your nickname mean? Do you have a special girlfriend, or do you like several girls? If math is your best subject, what is your worst subject? What do you want to do when you are finished with school?

Fathers

Tell me why? Why do we get hurt? Why do we let people get to us? We let them hurt our soul. Tell me why people you love continue to hurt you. They tell you they love you and they care, but it doesn't show. They tell you they do when someone else tells them about themselves. Then they want to say they care or they love you when only they say that when someone tells them about themselves. Then they wonder why you try to avoid them or the only time you talk to them is when you say hi just so you won't be rude.

But tell me, why they treat you like you're nothing. like they have no daughter? They have no heart. They don't support you or come to any of your basketball games or track meets, but they steady say they care and they love you and they won't ever hurt you. But they don't ever show it in actions or emotions.

But tell me, why they boss you around, tell you what you're not doing or tell you what they want to expect from you but they're not doing anything. They not there to even know what you're doing or how your doing in school or what you like to do about your life. They have nothing but negativity to tell or show toward you. All they do is complain about what you do. Then they use words that hurt and they act like they don't care or they talk to you like you're not even family, like you're someone from off the street that just walked into their house without notice.

But one day I'm not gone be there for him to talk to me like that no more. Then when I'm gone, he's gonna want me be back. That's why I asked you to tell me why.

-Midnight

From The Beat: Wow, Midnight, your Beat name clearly reflects the darkness of this passionate piece of writing from the heart. We cannot answer your questions because we do not know exactly what is going on. We don't know why your father is treating you like this, but maybe he is trying to deal with his own pain by heaping it on you. What would he say if he read what you've written here? Would he be hurt? Angry? Remorseful? Would you ever consider showing it to him as a way of promoting a dialogue with him about this?

Who Am I

Who am I? I am a young girl with a lot of pain and struggles. I am going through a lot right now and I have a lot on my mind. I am doing bad in school, and just getting to know my father after more than a dozen years. People have really been getting on my nerves. So that's been making me mad an' stuff.

But other than that, I've been doing good, like I run tracks. So that's been keeping things off my mind lately. So that if for now. Bye

-Tyrica

From The Beat: We're sorry you find yourself having to handle so many different pressures at the same time. How is the relationship with your father progressing? What do you do when people get on your nerves? What are you having the most trouble with in school, and what kind of help do you need to pull you through?

Don't Go To Jail!

Jail ain't no go for anybody. Jail will screw yo' life up. Jail is for suckas who do dumb stuff. Government makes the jails and makes da prisons and to screw wit' yo' mind.

I have an uncle dat went from Redwood jail to San Quentin Prison off a murder he didn't commit. Dat right there gave my uncle his 2nd strike. He write me every week how life is hard for him in there.

Me, I'm not goin' dat route. Me, I'm goin' to high school. I'm goin' to college. Then after that I'm goin' to da NBA. Me, yeah I get good grades; yeah, I'm cocky on da Basketball court. But nobody knows how my life has been screwed up since my uncle went to jail. So I'm going to make something of my life, not ruin it. Listen!

-Who Kyd

From The Beat: For someone who plays as much as you do in class, you have written a great piece here! We're very sorry about your uncle, but we hope his letters to you and the pain of his experience will keep you true to your words — finish school (with good grades), go to college, play professional ball, and make a decent life for yourself! What are the biggest obstacles you think you'll have to overcome to achieve your dreams?

Who I Is

I am who I am
I'm a football player and a fighter
I ride bikes
And I'm all bout my money
I'm a smoker,
And I love to play baseball
And I'm a big time thief.

-Jay Jay

From The Beat: We had to take out a couple of lines from this, Jay Jay, because they were not appropriate. (The Beat is not a bathroom wall!) At the same time, what we left in makes us very worried about your future. If you are telling the truth in this piece, it sounds to us like you want to act like a grown man when you're still a boy growing up. Big time thieves end up in big time prisons. People who are "all about their money" often find themselves locked in places where they are not even allowed to touch money! And, as far as girls are concerned, if you are smoking already and stealing already, you're headed for places where there are only other males to eat with, talk with, shower with, and be with. Think about it.

Gossip

Like, there's a lot of people I don't get along wit' and everybody I do get along wit' at my school that I assumed were my friends still talk about me behind my back. There's a couple of little bald-headed 'hood rats always got something to say.

I feel tense, a new student that if I say to them what I want to say, I lose a couple of my friends because I'm related to them. And it's a lot of stuff I want to say to them, especially this one baldhead girl dat go around kissing girls and they just get on my nerves.

-Bump

From The Beat: Why do you care what someone else does (like kissing girls) if it doesn't affect you? Why is that your business? Do you think you are doing anything to make your situation worse, or are you doing things to calm down tensions? Do you think that after you've been here for a little while — when you're no longer the "new student" — that you will feel more comfortable with the people here, and be able to find real friends? We hope you take your focus off those that get under your skin and refocus on yourself and those people with whom you can become good friends.

Never Go To Jail

I know somebody that went to jail. He went there because he used to sell drugs. He was there for a long time, but he got out and told me how it was. He told me never to go to jail or anything because it sucks. He said that in jail you get in a lot of fights and that you get injured a lot.

-Denise

From The Beat: When he came out of jail, did he decide to stop selling drugs? Did he decide to stop doing things that take him away from his family? We know that you're not going to do anything that risks your freedom

Don't Yell At Me

What you don't know
Don't make me start
Or even flow

You show me off like someone new
To playa haters 'cause I'm through
I like ordinary things, not just bein' wit' you
Basketball, cheerleading, an' eatin' too
Fun 'n' games are ma top priority
You make me cook, clean, an' iron
With no respect at all
Can't take my dignity
'Cause I'm not insecure
I'm powerful, smart, an' sensitive
So to tell me the way I should live
Is a bunch of bull.

-Candy Gurl

From The Beat: We're not sure who this is directed at, but it sounds like someone is not treating you with the respect you deserve. Who is telling you the way you should live? Are they telling you that because they don't think you are living right, or just because they think you are their business? How will you use your power, your intelligence and your sensitivity to better yourself and your life?

Jail Is All Bad

I know some people that they're in jail. They told me that people that are in jail, they killed themselves; they get bored; they get frustrated; and they cry. And I think jail for me is like a little room. You like can't even go one step.

People in jail are bad because they do drugs or something that causes them in there. What makes people bad is the drugs and alcohol. People miss their family and they missed everything.

-Guadalupe

From The Beat: We agree with what you've been told about jail. People do get frustrated and hateful, and they do cry — even though they can't show it, or they'll be seen as weak and become targets. Do you think everyone who goes to jail is guilty, or do you think the system sometimes makes mistakes? We agree with you about drugs and alcohol. We think there is no problem that drugs and alcohol can't make worse!

Jail Is Hell

There are many things that can lead you to jail. Either you pay tickets or you just go through a wrong path. I think that people in jail are all hurt somewhere inside but don't show it, so they act all tough.

I think that jail is hell! From what I've heard, I don't think everyone is guilty. No! Not everyone in jail are bad people. Depending on a person's personality is what makes a person good or bad. I think that everyone misses different things.

-Aylet

From The Beat: We agree with you that a lot of people who put on a tough exterior to make themselves look big and strong are actually feeling hurt inside and are afraid to reveal their pain. Do you know anyone who acts tough in school who you think is covering up feelings they don't want others to see? Do you ever try to hide your own emotions (anger? fear? fain?) by putting on a front?

Some Bull

Dis is some bull
I don't like her, she fake
Why I got to be with her
Dis is some bull
I don't want to walk three damn miles
What I look like
If I say I don't want to, then damn, let it be
Dis some bull
I'm sick of writin'
I'm sick of talkin'
I want to go home.

-Jamaican Candy

From The Beat: We don't know who you are talking about or why she gets on your nerves so much, but we want to advise you as strongly as we can to chill! Being "sick" of school, and "sick" of writing, and "sick" of talking really will make you sick! School is an absolute necessity for a decent future in which you can take care of yourself. Without that educational grounding, you will find it very hard to make a living, which means you will always find yourself feeling "sick." Why not try to find something in school that you like, something that interests you, and put all your attention to mastering that thing, to becoming the best there is? That way, you won't have to deal with those petty people who make you sick!

Tribute To Robert Frost

"Nature's first green is gold,
Her hardest hue to hold.
Her early leaf's a flower;
But only so an hour.
Then leaf subsides to leaf
So Eden sank to grief
So dawn goes down to day
Nothing gold can stay."

I would imply that my life is like this beautiful poem.

-Ovier

From The Beat: We love Robert Frost's poem, but when you quote someone else's work, you should always say who wrote it. What we would have liked you to write about is what about your life "is like this beautiful poem"? In other words, you only wrote us one line about you, and that's not enough. We want to know what you think and feel, so next time, tell us more.

Who I Am

I am a person that like to play basketball and soccer. I have a big family. I have two brothers and one sister. I am the youngest of my family.

I don't like to draw, because I can't. My favorite television program is WWE. I like how Undertaker fights.

I would like to own construction work. After some years, I might like to buy a new Escalade truck. My goals are: buy a big house, have many cars, and have my own construction work.

-Carlos

From The Beat: Thank you, Carlos, for answering our questions and telling us something about who you are. We've never seen WWE, so what can you tell us about it? We notice that in your goals you don't mention having your own family. Is that something you've thought about?

What's Up

A rogue is a mischievous thief. But out here in EPA it's different. In EPA the definition of Rogue is a way to say what's up. Therefore, what up Rogue?

-Tonga Truck

From The Beat: Does "rogue" have any other meanings in EPA? Can it ever be used in a bad way? Do you know any mischievous thieves?

I Am Rengo

Hi! I am Rengo. My favorite sport is soccer. I played in the middle right. I'm almost 15 years. My biggest dream is to be a professional player and play in "Barcelona.." I was born in Peru. I came to the U.S. at 10 years, I been four years in the U.S. with my dad and bro that is 21 years old. He is in college. My granpa was born in Chile.

-Rengo

From The Beat: This is very interesting, Rengo. Do you ever listen to your grandpa's stories from Chile, or your parents' stories of Peru? What do you miss about Peru?

What I like

I am Daniel and I love cars. I been liking cars since I was like seven. I just decide to have a car dat I can drive and to have a body shop so I can fix my own cars and to serve other people if they have dreams about working wit' cars or people dat want to start their own business.

I am a person that have dreams, and dat want to help other people wit' their dreams. So that's who I am. I would like to have my own body shop and to help my mom and my own family, and to support other people dat have dreams like I do.

That's who I am.

-Daniel

From The Beat: We admire you for having a clear idea of what you want to do with your own life, and also for wanting to help others achieve their dreams. How will avoid the temptations and dangers of the street so that nothing will interfere with getting what you want?

Who Am I

Who am I? I am a young individual who stands out and stands up for herself. I am a cool person like ice cream on a hot summer's day. I got an attitude of a bull but a heart so sweet. Who am I? An individual who thinks of herself as a princess, a spoiled brat. Oh, that's not me, but you best of believe that I do get my way no matter what you say.

Sometimes you may think of me as rude, but I'm no. I'm just expressing my feelings. That's just me and I'm not changing for nobody. So who am I? I am what I do, I am what I say I am who I am, and ain't changin' no way.

-Rina

From The Beat: Well, we do get a picture of a strong young woman in this piece, Rina. But to keep it real, we also get the picture of "a spoiled brat" (to use your words), You say you're not, but then you say you get your way no matter what. How will you get along in a world where you always have to have your way?

Don't Go To Jail

I have a cousin that got into jail because he was drinking and driving at the same time. They found out he was drunk because he had to do a test to see if he was drunk or not and got caught.

I think people in jail, I think they're mean and think they're tough. Jail to me is a bad place to be because you might not make friends or make enemies. If I was in jail because people might be missing me, wanting to start fighting and I wouldn't trust anyone. I also wouldn't like it because that will be my 1st time there and I don't know the place.

-Isais

From The Beat: Did your cousin learn something from having to go to jail? Did you learn anything from his experience? What? Since you know you wouldn't like jail, don't do anything that will lead you there.

Santa Cruz

La Hora Para Dejar El Juego

El juego termina cuando caes preso porque si no caes en la cárcel nunca vas a dejar de jugar ese juego de andar en las calles, vendiendo drogas. Yo ya deje mi juego porque caí preso. Recuerda la mañana que disperse en la cárcel y no me gusto.

El amor esta como cuando uno es buena persona y también cuando es respetoso con los demas personas. Como puedes ganarte el amor de la madre cuando tu sientes que el amor de la madre es tan grande y lo siente mas cuando te separas de ellos.

Que lindo es cuando sientes amor por tu madre. Demuestrale todo el amor a tu madre porque ella se sentira alegre, orgullosa, y feliz también.

From The Beat: ¿Crees que esta experiencia sea suficiente para que cambies tu forma de ser? No hay que esperar algo peor para poder daries cuenta porque todo lo maravilloso de la vida se puede acabar en un instante. El amor de las madre es lo más bello que podemos tener en esta vida. Por eso hay que hacer lo posible para darle el mismo amor que ellos nos han dado. ¿Y tú le has dado a tu madre lo que ella se merece? Si no, has pensado en como hacerla feliz? ¿Crees que puedas hacerla sentir orgullosa?

Time To Quit The Game

The game ends when you get locked up because if you don't end up in jail, you're never going to stop playing that game of being out on the streets, selling drugs. I already stopped playing my game because I got locked up. I remember the day I woke up in jail and I did not like it.

Love is there when you are a good person and also when you're respectful towards other people. How can you win over the love of a mother when you feel that the love from a mother is so big and you feel it even more when you're separated from them?

Oh how beautiful it is when you feel love for your mother. Show your mother all the love that you have for her because she will feel happy, proud, and joyous as well.

-Elvin B1

From The Beat: Do you believe that this experience is enough for you to change the way you are? You don't have to wait for something worse to occur before telling her how you feel because everything that's marvelous in life can come to an end in an instant. The love from mothers is the most beautiful thing that we can have in this life. That's why we have to do what's possible to give them the same kind of love that they have given us. Have you given your mother what she deserves? If not, have you thought about how you can make her happy? Do you believe that you could make her feel proud?

¿Donde Esta El Amor?

¿Donde esta el amor? Es una nueva pregunta porque por ejemplo yo me he fijado muchas veces como la gente lo discrimina a uno. Por ejemplo, una vez me llebaron al hospital y me tenian todo encadenado y la gente se apartaba y se me quedaban viendo como si fuera un gran criminal. Otra fue con mi novia. Tenia un año y medio de andar con ella. Esta vez que caí preso, yo hable con ella y me dijo que me iba a esperar. Ya pasaron unos meses y no me ha escrito nada.

Cuando salga quiero tener una respuesta porque no me escribio y si no la tengo, se la voy a sacar con una golpiza. Me vale volver preso porque por ella quiero hacer este programa y salir de aqui. Quiero también ponerme una gran loquera y escuchar la música que me gusta. Bueno, homies me tengo que ir.

From The Beat: ¿Donde esta tu amor? Se nota que has pasado por experiencias vergonzosas. ¿Te han hecho cambiar tu forma de pensar lo que has vivido? ¿Crees que tus errores han hecho te han puesto en situaciones que desees no haber pasado? Creemos que las cosas no se solucionan de la manera como quieres solucionarlas. Tú no tienes el derecho de lastimar a nadie, ni a tu mujer, ni futura esposa, no a tus futuros hijos. Cualquier que sea la respuesta de ella, deberias de escucharla primero, despues entender la situación y sea lo que sea la respuesta, tienes que asumirlo como todo un hombre. Acuérdate que la violencia solo trae más violencia.

Where's The Love?

Where's the love? It's a new question because for example, I have noticed many times how people discriminate. For example: One time, they took me to the hospital and they had me all chained up and people would move aside and they would stare at me like if I were a big criminal. Another person was my girlfriend. I had been with her for a year and a half. This time when I got locked up, I spoke with her and she told me that she was going to wait for me. A couple months have passed and she hasn't written anything to me.

When I get out, I want to have an answer why she didn't write to me and if I don't get it, I'm going to get it out of her by force. I don't give a damn if I get locked up again because I want to do this program and get out of here for her. I also want to get hella wasted and listen to the music that I like. Well homies, I have to go.

-Jonathan LCRS

From The Beat: Where's the love? Based on your piece, we can tell that you have been through embarrassing experiences. Has what you have lived through made you change the way you think? Do you believe that your errors have placed you in situations that you wish you had never been in? We believe that things are not solved the way you want to solve them. You don't have the right to hurt anyone, not even your woman, your future wife, nor your future kids. Whatever her answer may be, you should listen to it first. Then, understand the situation, and regardless of what her answer may be, you have to accept everything like a man. Keep in mind that violence only brings more violence.

Mis Pensamientos De Los Temas

¿Cuando sera la hora de cambiar? Sera hasta que llega la última hora? Creo que hasta que nos pasen algo o hasta cuando estamos encerrado podemos cambiar algunos pensamientos. Cuando uno esta encerrado en su cuarto lo único que piensa es en lo que uno hizo.

El amor se encuentra en todos lados. Por ejemplo, el amor de la madre. El amor se encuentra en un templo sagrado o como decimos nosotros. En una iglesia hay muchas personas que reciben amor con las manos abiertas.

Creo que la gente odia a otra gente por algo que tal vez paso en el pasado y otras personas porque solo piensan en hacer el mal.

From The Beat: Creemos que estas en lo cierto. Hoy en dia muchos estan esperando que les pasen algo grande para poder cambiar. ¿Dinos de ti, estas esperando algo grande para cambiar o con esta experiencia es suficiente? ¿Recibes algún tipo de amor que nos comentastes? ¿Si, si, das de ese mismo amor a los que te dan? Acuérdate que para recibir también tienes que dar. Te agradecemos por tus palabras y esperamos escuchar sobre tus planes de la vida para la próxima.

My Thoughts On The Topics

When will it be time to change? Will it be until the last hour comes? I believe that until something happens to us or until we're incarcerated will we be able to change some thoughts. When you are incarcerated in your room, the only thing that you think of is in what you did.

Love can be found in all parts. For example: The love of a mother. Love is found in a sacred temple or like we say. In a church, there are many people who receive love with open arms.

I believe people hate other people for something that maybe happened in the past and other people just because they think about doing bad.

-Dimas B1

From The Beat: We believe that you are right. Nowadays, many people are waiting for something huge to happen to them in order for them to change. Tell us: Are you waiting for something big to happen to you in order for you to change, or is this experience enough to change you? Do you receive some kind love like the ones that you commented to us about? Do you give back this same kind of love to the people that you receive love from? Remember that in order to receive you also have to give. We thank you for your words and we hope to hear about your life plans the next time you decide to write.

THEE MOUSEMAN

This next writer, Thee Mouseman, has done some serious time, so for those of you who are facing hard time, it might be a great idea to read about his experience. His view is why change something that's virtually already set in stone with him. However, he takes a different view when it comes to his lil' folks. He's tired of seeing them getting locked up, and you can hear the compassion seeping through his words. We hope to receive more from Thee Mousman who writes us from Mule Creek State Prison in Lone, CA.

TBW

Couldn't help it! Just had to write something. It has become my nature of this beast. I've always been a writer and artist. Don't be fooled by the chicken scratch. I took second place at the California State Fair in 1994.

Always (here)...

Dear Beat Within

Yesterday I saw your publication for the first time, today I saw a second. I must say my emotions ran the gambit, anger, fear, hate, frustration, confused, pity and love. I thank you for this. In particular, one kid who gave what she could in words in volume 11.05, titled, "Missing" from Cynthia 150 Crew. I do not know the limitations of your publication, so I will let your emotions be the guide for you...

Change The Past

Why go back and change something? I refuse to try to adjust what has been. Though I willingly tell you my past was all too colorful. All my life on the streets, now, let's not go there! I came to adult prison at 16 years old, ain't seen the light yet, 45 now.

All my banging been right here in the big house, been in the knife fights, race wars, wars on cops, hate and fear, oh yeah that's the soup of the day. Want extras? Not a problem, we got plenty! I seen my brothers in battle die, I've seen many die. By gun, knife, needle, bad medical care or just old age, I've seen every race on the face of sweet mother earth welcome a youngster with a smile. I seen men die too young, I've seen men rot too old!

I saw what did it too, attitude, drugs, thugs, the all mighty dollar. I've seen corruption. I've seen a blind eye that turned the other way while the homies died.

This is my path, I have seen, now I must share, don't ask me where I am from, don't ask me who I ride with. I don't claim no 'hood! I ride for you; I'll tell you the truth. I helped make this possible. Make what possible? For all your mammas to cry 'cause their babies are locked up. I helped carve the path you travel today — OG all the way!

Something's not right! My lil' folks, they all locked up. Someone done flipped the script. This, you my young folks in cage, awe hell no! That ain't right, we need to change that!

Now me, a full grown man, what kind of punk chump would I be if I was to leave y'all hanging while I went back in time to pretty up my life. I don't bail like that.

I gladly stay where I am at; pay the piper as long as I can holler at y'all to tell you what's real and what's not. I ain't got to get political, I ain't gotta use big words, I keep it personal and real all the time, every time.

How you like being in a box my young folks? No, that ain't cool with you. I can tell you how to get out, how to stay out. I'll tell you the truth. Mama ain't gotta cry.

The past is a nice place to visit, but we live in the future, we can't change the past, but I'll be damned if we can't make the future much brighter. No more babies in cages that's the bomb. Old Folks...

Found

Something that I found in my life, is the person in the mirror, I call myself. It took quite sometime and a lot of work to find me, and when I did, I really did not like what I saw, what I felt like and the things I did to others. Ouch! That is me?

While looking for me, I realized something about other people, they all got problems too! A lot of others struggle to find out who they are too. Often in their struggles they bumped into me, sometimes making me bleed! Sometimes, not noticing me. (Which is the absolute worst hurt!!)

I had a father, (anyone can be a father), but I didn't have a dad. My father and I could be in the same room and not notice each other. Sure I knew a mother's love, but when I was a kid, I wanted dad's love, dad's attention, and dad's time. But dad was doing his own time, wondering how come his dad ignored him.

Then I started to "understand" we all have problems, it actually made me happy! Why? 'Cause no one likes being alone! But at the time, I could not help my father work out his problems. And he, in his pain, could not help me work out mine. We both struggled for answers to change.

When we are young, it seems that pain is eternal, that it just will not go away or make sense at all. Ha? But, as we get older, we realize that nothing lasts forever, things always change, always, Cynthia. Life is all about change. Don't struggle to hold pain, let it change. Understanding allows change.

Now when he and I enter a room, the first person I look for is my dad! And he looks for his son. We both had a lot of work to do to be the person we wanted to, and we have more to go! Why? 'Cause things always change. We are great friends. I love my dad and he loves me.

Cynthia, even if your father never becomes your dad, remember that we all have our own issues and emotions to deal with! If you find it in "yourself" to forgive your father, I mean really! Not just words! You will find the path that leads to who you are, and how happy you can be.

I give you, Cynthia, these words from an old man, "Not all flowers bloom in the same season." That means not everyone is happy at the same time. But your time is coming. How do I know that? Things change!

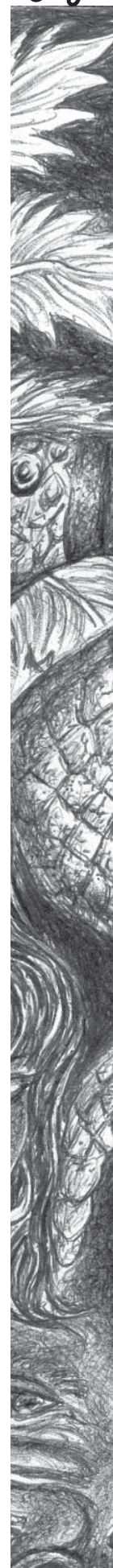
One of the biggest mistakes I ever made was thinking that what I was missing did not matter. Because believing that "allowed" me to deny others the same, sure "it" mattered. I was denied something! What, I will never quiet know. But I was missing something, I knew it 'cause it hurt hecka bad!

Funny thing about the past, we always want it to change. It should have been different huh? But we cannot go to the past to change it, we should go there to remember, we must. Remember what it was to feel denied, remember it hurt so bad that you had to convince yourself that it did not matter! Then we justified denying others, cause no one gave it to us. Ouch again! Remember when you choose a partner for life? Do not make the same mistake your father did. Maybe in time he will make a wonderful grand father!

Cynthia, I am in prison. I have been here non-stop since I was a kid of 16 years; I am 45 years old now. Do you think I was a good dad? No way! I've spent the last 29 years in prison. But I am a wonderful grandpop! I can tell by the smiles on my grand daughters' faces.

I never learned to be a dad. But I was forgiven. That forgiveness allowed others and me to grow. That forgiveness is what I found, and it allows everyone an opportunity to grow and have a wonderful life... to let me be me. The best of me, the best of you.

Be good, be bright, be well, and above all be forgiving. Remember-your season is coming. For Cynthia aka The Lil' Flower



WT GRAJEDA WT Grajeda's magnificent story "Tiger" is coming to its conclusion this week, with our final installment of a wonderful love story, adventure of young Tiger aka Chris Grajeda and Sweet Girlie aka Sabrina! WT Grajeda showcases his incredible talents and steps up huge with this "Wizard Of Oz" like tale, thanks in part to his son, our old friend Chris, who is now in CYA, who so kindly offered us this amazingly well read/told story, "Tiger." In the last issue (11.15) we ran Part 6 and Part 7. Well, in a nutshell this spiritual story takes our fearless young couple, who met at school, and then innocently ventured off to an old barn, little did they know that they would soon find themselves in a surreal yet beautiful world of talking trees, and a talk dog/frog known as Ouranos. Now in our last installment our young couple are working towards getting back home with the help of Strider. We truly hope you enjoyed this piece of work, and if you happened to miss any of the installments reach out to us and we would be happy to send you "Tiger." Thank you WT Grajeda!

Tiger, Part 8

In my surprise, you took a hold of both my hands, looked me in the eyes and started singing.

I don't know about tomorrow, I just live from day to day; I don't borrow from it's sunshine, for it's skies may turn gray. I don't worry over the future, for I know what Jesus said, and today I'll walk besides Him, for He knows what is ahead.
-Chorus

Every step us getting brighter as the golden stairs I climb.

Every burdens getting lighter, every cloud is silver lined.

There the sun is always shinning, there no tear will dim the eye;

at the ending of the rainbow, where the mountains touch the sky.

-Chorus

*I don't know about tomorrow, it may bring me poverty;
But the one who feeds the sparrow, is the one who stands by me. And the path that is my portion, maybe through the flame or flood; but His presence goes before me, and I'm covered with His blood.*

- Chorus

Many things about tomorrow I don't seem to understand.

But I know who holds tomorrow, and I know who holds my hand

- Chorus

I was in sort of a daze when you stopped your singing. Though your words had stopped, the pretty birds went right on melodizing. To say the whole experience was mesmerizing would be an understatement. The whole valley of trees stood in contentment just to hear you and the birds make beautiful music together. You, right then and there, became the most prettiest girl in the whole round world to me.

I wanted to say something but couldn't think of anything. I didn't have to try for long because you started singing again. Never taking your sparkling brown eyes off of my eyes, the birds changed their melody and you started singing:

Down at the cross where my Savior died, down where for cleansing from sin I cried, there to my heart was the blood applied:

- Chorus

I am so wonderously saved from sin, Jesus so sweetly abides within; there at the cross where He took me in:
-Chorus

O, precious fountain that saves from sin, I am so glad I have entered in; there Jesus saves me and keeps me clean:
-Chorus

Come to this fountain so rich and sweet; cast your poor soul at the Saviors feet! plunge in today and be made complete:
- Chorus

Singing glory to His name. I'm saying glory to His name,

I'm singing glory to His name! There to my heart was the blood applied singing glory to His name.

-Chorus

Strider broke the hypnotic phase that your voice seem to put on everybody and everything.

"Now my two young humans, are you ready to travel the Rainbow?" He didn't wait for an answer, He, with a great mighty leap, jumped into the air.

There were many voices shouting their farewells as we ascended upward and disappeared into the sky.

"You don't have to worry about falling off, for Theos' righteous right hand has a hold of you, and that will never happen." Strider's voice boomed through the rush of the wind.

You sat behind me with both arms wrapped around my waist tight. Both my hands held tightly to Strider's great tawny coat. For no apparent reason, we thought, Strider roared a great big thunderous roar and as if by magic word a rainbow appeared. We found ourselves atop Strider's back casually walking the rainbow.

"How are we staying up on the rainbow Strider?" Your voice was full of awe and curiosity.

"Sabrina, there are many, many worlds in this universe, yours is just one of them. In the tongue of the ancients it is call, Cheled, for time there is fleeting. You just left the world Everlasting called Ouranos, which is also refered to by humans as Heaven, where all will be one after the precious Lamb's Book is read out loud.

"Every world has what you humans call magic. What you call magic is in truth God's enduring love for you. It is God in His Almighty essence showing you His amazing wonderful grace.

"A rainbow, Sabrina, is for all to enjoy, for it was created by God as a covenant of peace for you and your world. For the mountains shall depart and the hills be removed, but God's kindness shall not depart from you, nor shall His covenant of peace be removed says the Lord, who has mercy on you. He wanted to give you, and all that love Him. And look upon Him and become saved, a very special gift, so He took from around His throne a part of His personal rainbow that He has created to halo about Him, He, as a Father sits high and watches over you, and put it in His sky for all who desire to look upon it and love Him."

He stopped walking and talking for a moment then said, "Come, get down and walk with me a bit."

We jumped very lightly off His back making sure we held hands. The rainbow, to our surprise, was under our feet.

"Now, see, you believe and it is possible. The trouble with you folks is getting you to believe in the Creator of the rainbow, it is impossible to please God without faith. With Jesus in your heart the rainbow of God's love will never leave you nor forsake you. It will always be a lamp for your feet and a light for your path. The rainbow is God's covenant love.

"Now, I want you two to take heed in what I am about to say... There is evil in places that you may think are fun. The next time either one of you feel the urge to impress the other, think first about the consequence(s)."

Strider looked at you. "Sabrina, you received the Holy Spirit. and in time of trouble back in the barn He had you cry out to Jesus and Jesus saved you and Christopher. Christopher does not yet have the Holy Spirit, and if you Sabrina love the Savior as you did the day you cried and asked Him into your life, you will help Christopher walk the steps of Calvary."

Strider paused from talking for a few moments and in that time my mind raced a million thoughts a second, my heart felt as it has never felt before.

"Christopher, Sabrina, do not be afraid of showing each other your true feelings, for the world that you live in is so obsessed in holding back their true feelings for one another that you would rather fight than enjoy God's own image.

"You two kids have a special talent. God has given you both wonderful talents. Christopher, you first have to receive before your gift can glorify God. Exploit your talent of love to all peoples, nourish it, let it mature, for what you two kids

continued from previous page

have for one another are what rainbows are made of, and what rainbows wait to touch, share God's peace and love with others." Strider lowered Himself, we climbed upon His back and we were off running.

It was just a matter of seconds before the great almighty rush of wind stopped. Strider came to a halt and we found ourselves in your father's backyard. Strider said His farewell then leaped up and disappeared. We stood alone just staring up in the clouds as he ascended.

Then an urge over took me in such a way that I couldn't deny it.

"Sabrina I'll race you to the church, I... I have to go right now, you coming?"

"Yes, I'll go with you." You had the look of surprise on your pretty face.

We ran without stopping, the whole two and a half blocks to the church and up the steps. When we got inside, I stopped dead cold. I was here, but I had no idea what to do. You must of seen my hesitance.

You gently placed your palm on the side of my face, I could feel the warmth of your hand upon my cheek.

"Chris, do you believe Jesus is the Son of God, that he died on the cross for your sins, and that God raised Him up to be your Savior?"

"I do with all my heart, I always believed it but nobody knew though."

"Then all you have to do is go down on your knees and tell Jesus that you're a sinner and don't wanna be a sinner no more and that you can't live without His love."

I dropped to my knees right then and there just a few feet inside Calvary Chapel's doors.

"Jesus I love you, I'm sorry I've sinned. I don't wanna sin no more, please let my be Yours, and give me YOUR PRECIOUS HOLY SPIRIT, Strider said if I have you in my life that I will never be alone

'cause You will never leave me or forsake me. Jesus, I don't wanna be alone anymore, please come into my life, please, please, I need You badly!"

I didn't realize I was crying, or how long I stood there with a tear stained face.

I just knelt there on my knees, but in the back of my mind, I thought I heard my name being called. I looked up and you had your arm stretched out, I took a hold of it and you helped me up.

I stood there while you wiped my face with your hands, wondering if I felt any different and decided I did a little. Then thought, different like joyful, but then decided I wasn't.

"Tiger, are you alright?" You looked at me. "I better get

WT GRAJEDA (CONT.)

home."

"Yo, I'm cool."

We started walking out of the church and a little voice inside me said, "you haven't changed, you'll never change, your no different, you don't feel any different."

But the moment that we crossed the threshold of the Calvary Chapel, and the brilliance of the shining sun hit us; from somewhere deep inside me-an urge, a feeling so strong overtook me, without even considering to hesitate, I yelled out real loud.

"One, two, three!" Threw my arms up in the air and jumped as high as I could and said, "Praise the Lord!" And before my feet hit the ground, you threw up your arms and said, "One, two, three, Praise the Lord!"

We heard clapping. We looked around and a crowd of about ten or fifteen people, young and old was staring at us clapping and cheering. We heard one of the older ones say.

"Now, that there is the way we ought to be praisin' the Lord. You two youngun's justa keep it up."

I put my hands in my pocket, which was my way when I had to think and look cool at the same time. I felt the medallion.

"Yo, Sweet Girlie, I have a present for you, close your eyes and don't open them until I say so."

You did as I asked. I took out the medallion, put it over your head, lifted your beautiful auburn hair and set the chain comfortably around your supple neck.

"Alright, you could look now."

You opened your eyes, lifted the medallion to your pretty face and gasped out loud. That made me smile inwardly and outwardly, right then, I knew, I was different now. And that no voice will ever convince me otherwise, for I knew the way, the Truth and the Life, and it made me free. I whispered under my breath "Thank You Jesus."

"It must be worth a fortune, it's so beautiful, oh thank you Chris Grajeda, my Tiger, you're the nicest boy I know." You threw your arms around my neck and bent one leg back like in the old fashion movies. Then kissed me on the cheek.

My heart felt as if it was bursting right out my chest, I was certain that you could feel the thumping of it against you.

"Yo Sabrina Montoya Sweet Girlie; without you, there would be no rainbows."

The End

MEGAN M.

The two poems below came to us from someone we know nothing about, except that she's currently at a residential or day treatment facility in Chandler, Arizona, called Parc Place which describes its mission: "To provide the therapeutic environment and continuum of treatment services necessary to empower troubled youths and their families to obtain insight, skills and strength to engage in a life-long process of recovery." We hope that by asking these sad questions and remembering her baby sister, Megan finds the comfort she seeks.

Princess Aurora, RIP (sister)

I know you're in Heaven smiling down
Looking at yo' family like what went wrong
But you been gone for so long
But what's going on?

We all miss you

Even though we didn't know each other
But there will always be a special place

For you in my heart, it's O.k.

You got taken away at 11 months old

It's a good thing 'cause you the only one who hasn't been to jail

But you easily got accepted into the gates of Heaven

Now as for the rest, it won't be so easy

So Rest In Peace

Princess Aurora

Why

Why weren't you there when I shed a couple of tears?

Why weren't you there to help me conquer my fears?

Why weren't you there when I needed a listening ear?

Why weren't you there?

Why weren't you there when I needed someone to care?

Why weren't you there when I needed someone to share a couple of memories?

Why?

Why did you hit us?

Why did you do drugs?

Why did you choose drugs over us?

Why did you leave me all alone without a care of my own?

Why wasn't love shown?

Why?

Why weren't you there when I got beat for not calling him dad?

Why I asked myself?

But all I know it's that I can't change her but I can change me

"Cause all I see is me doing something with my life

That you couldn't do

And I know it isn't cool

But who's the blame in this situation

And only you can answer.

PAUL JAY REED

Once again, Paul Jay Reed finds a story of redemption and hope in the life of a fellow prisoner named Row which we hope will inspire other young people, whether they find their redemption through religion, as Mr. Row has, or through some other avenue. Like the subject of his story, Paul Reed himself embodies the triumph of the human spirit over adversity — especially now that he's no longer in jail. (Formerly, he wrote *The Beat from the Beaumont, Texas jail*).

That Ain't Me No Mo'

When I first met Row, he was on the recreation yard, singing Christian songs with a group of other inmates. I didn't think much of him at the time. In fact, to be quite frank, I had written him off as one of the many men I see daily, who use religion to escape the ennui of incarceration. You know the type: always arguing the Bible, they're never wrong, and have an answer for everybody's problems — from God, of course; can't hold a conversation without it turning into a sermon, using religion as a prop to manipulate everyone around them; and everything they say is a direct revelation from God himself! I couldn't have been more wrong about Row.

I've observed Row over the months and, as I've gotten to know him, I'm impressed with his sincerity. There's no shortage of Bible arguments here, but I've never seen Row participate in any. It's possible to talk to Row without being preached at. He's a very warm, friendly guy, whose smile alone can light up any dark place he finds himself.

Row isn't your typical jailhouse religion kind of guy. He is a positive force in this negative environment. This made me more interested in him, so I began to watch him more closely, only to discover that there is no hypocrisy in this brother.

What's more, Row is the most talented rapper I've ever heard. His lyrics have become legendary here, leaving both guards and inmates mesmerized. I had to find out what makes this humble, talented man so different from the countless others I've encountered here. One day I sat with him and asked him to tell me a little about himself. What I thought would be a simple causerie, turned into an enthralling drama of triumphs and tragedies...

Roosevelt Broussard was born the eldest of five children. He had a different father from the rest of his siblings. He lived in a home, in Beaumont, with his mother, stepfather, and his brothers and sisters. The home was anything but functional.

"My stepfather used to beat my mother regularly. I tried to shield my brothers and sisters from what was happening, because he used to beat her so bad.

"My mother wound up getting a big settlement check and one day, after my step dad had beaten her all night, when he went to work, she gathered us up and we moved to California. We lived in Inglewood for a while, then moved to L.A. We stayed off of 75th and Hoover. We lived in California for about a year and a half.

"During that time, my mother started creeping out at night and staying out later and later, leaving me to take care of my brothers and sisters by myself. I wasn't but eleven at the time. I suspected, even then, that she was doing drugs, but I wasn't sure."

Things started falling apart for them and when his mother ran out of money. She moved her family back to Texas. During this time, his mother became open about her addiction to drugs, and introduced her son to it.

"My mom used to give me big sacks of weed for myself. She told me that she knew I'd eventually start smokin', like everybody else. She said sh'd rather me get it from her than on the streets. She used to buy me wine to drink, as well."

As in California, Row was left with the responsibility of caring for his siblings, while his mother pursued her drug addiction and street life. Her drug lifestyle started taking a heavier toll as she found herself in and out of jail. Child protective services got involved and took her children from her. Row and his brothers and sisters were separated, placed in the care of different relatives. Row wound up being sent to live with his grandparents, who lived in a housing project. His grandparents were elderly — in their eighties — and not equipped to deal with a teenager.

"My grandparents were decent people, but because of their age, they had little influence on me. Instead, I was more influenced by the hustle and flow of the projects. Everywhere I looked, I saw guys driving big fancy cars, wearing expensive clothes, and surrounded by fine women; and I wanted that too.

"In the projects everybody celebrated life daily with drugs and alcohol; so I found a place of acceptance for drugs, alcohol, and illegal activities. It seemed all right at the time."

Row started hanging out with other delinquent boys, drinking, getting high, and breaking the law. But in school he managed to make straight A's. He was living a double-life: a model student by

day and selling and doing drugs at night.

Row at the time, had an opportunity to live with his biological father but decided against it. "My father was strict and had rules that I would have had to live by. For instance, I knew I wouldn't have been able to hang out and get high at his house. Living with my grandparents gave me a taste of freedom. I didn't want to give that up."

Eventually Row started smoking primos — a mixture of marijuana and cocaine, rolled together. "Every generation has its own popular drug of choice. For us it was primos. Everybody was doin' it, including the cheerleaders at school. By smoking cocaine in that form, I found a place for acceptance for the drug.

"I considered myself a playa and thug, doin' what I thought was cool. We would get loaded on primos and start 'battle rapping' to see who had the tightest lyrics."

Row's dream was to become a famous rap artist and felt he had what it took; but he didn't really believe he'd make it, so he placed that dream on the back burner and continued selling drugs. Row got caught smoking marijuana at school and was suspended. Soon after that he dropped out completely, got a job, and continued selling drugs, getting high, and hanging out.

When he turned twenty, he quit smoking primos, but continued smoking marijuana — the drug his mother introduced him to. Then at the age of twenty-one he had a dream that deeply affected him. "I dreamed that I saw Jesus, and he told me to separate myself from everyone that I was hanging out with. It shook me up so bad that I stopped hanging with the fellas, but I still smoked my weed."

By the time he turned twenty-two, he decided to get married and sired three children with his wife. Life was beginning to come together for him.

For nearly four years, Row lived a moderately ideal life with his wife and children. He had worked his way up to supervisor at a restaurant and despite his continuing marijuana use, did well for himself. Then a series of tragedies struck that had a profound effect upon him. The people he loved most began dying, almost at once. His eldest daughter died, followed by the deaths of both grandparents and his father. This left an aching void in him that nothing seemed to fill. He went back to smoking primos and hustling on the streets, selling drugs to drown out the pain and confusion. It was his old comfort zone, where he felt safest — the streets.

"I got heavily involved in a lifestyle of money, drugs, and sex. I was selling weed and crack and sleeping around with prostitutes who were addicted to crack. Eventually, one night, one of the women I was tricking with, introduced me to the pipe and from that moment on, I became addicted to crack cocaine."

Row's early teen years had taught him how to live a double life, and he did his best to hide his addiction from others, especially his family. But not everyone was fooled.

"When I scored dope, I usually went to the side of town where no one knew me. One day I was trying to score some work (wholesale crack cocaine) from this guy I had never seen before. I was dressed nice, driving a nice car; no one could assume by my appearance that I was a crackhead. But this cat just kept looking at me, hard. I felt as though he was looking straight through me. It was strange. All I had come to do is score some dope.

"He started testifying to me about his life. He told me that he started out just selling crack, had a job, wife and kids, a home, nice cars, plenty of money, everything. He said, eventually he started smoking his own supply and got so hooked that he lost everything he once had and got sent to prison. He warned me that if I didn't stop now, I was headed for a great fall. I couldn't understand why this dude was telling me all this; how could he know me? It was like the Lord was warning me through this brother.

"He touched me so much that I kept coming back, looking for him but never saw him again after that day.

"Man I just kept doing what I was doing until my addiction got completely out of control. And just like that brother tried to warn me, I lost everything: my job, my home, my car, and my wife and kids. I had destroyed myself and those who I loved.

To support his addiction, Row went back to the things he had learned in the projects, growing up: burglarizing, jacking, and stealing. And his in-and-out-of jail-cycle began. He was convicted twice for theft and sentenced to two terms in the Texas State Jail system. His life was in a rapid, downward spiral, and he was doing nothing about it. Each time he got out of jail, he hoped he could do better, but did nothing while incarcerated to increase his odds of staying free. Instead, he kept getting caught up in the jailhouse game of hustle and wait. The moment he'd walk out the gate, his old cohorts would be waiting for him, encouraging him back to the street life; Row hadn't built any resistance to their lure. Finally, one day Row found himself standing before a judge, being sentenced to a term of twenty years for robbery.

continued from previous page

While in jail this time, Row was forced to take a serious look at his life and the decisions he had been making.

"I'm thirty-five now and have run out of excuses for myself. I used to blame my failures on society, racism, my mother's drugs addiction, my surroundings, and the fact that I had no father figure and was disadvantaged. But I thought about my brothers and sisters, how differently they turned out. All of them are doing good. One of my sisters is an RN, married with children, and has her own home. I have a brother who is a truck driver, and making good money. I'm the only one who got locked up."

"We all grew up in the ghetto and were exposed to the same hardships and disadvantages, but they made different choices than me. They chose not to smoke weed, hang out in the streets, and stayed in school. I began to realize that I'm where I'm at because of the choices I've made."

Row decided it was time to make radical changes in his life. He made his first step, when he started examining his life and started taking responsibility for himself. He then found a spiritual path to follow toward making changes in his life. He committed himself to Christ and began working on his attitude and behavior.

"It wasn't easy at first. I was so used to negativity, but I had to learn to change my attitude about the things I once thought were cool. I still made a lot of mistakes, but each night I'd confess these faults to God and ask him to help me break free from them. I realized that it was up to me to change and I started working at it everyday. No one can make me happy but me. I have joy now, and no one and nothing can take that away from me."

Row's *joie de vivre* is a living testament to the power of the human spirit to overcome the greatest tragedies of existence. The road to freedom for Row has been a very rough one indeed. He has lived through and experienced things that many of us can relate to: watching his mother being beaten and turning to drugs, having to become a man before he was ready, being exposed to drugs and crime, and his own drug abuse. Yet, in turning his life around, he has become a living inspiration for those of us who are still stuck in the cycles of failure.

Row and I began to discuss the direction so many youngsters are taking today. I asked him, with all his experiences, what would he say to young brothers today who are now living the life that led him

PAUL JAY REED (CONT.)

here.

"Man there's a better way, we must first stop destroying ourselves, then we need to stop destroying each other. Too many young brothas wanna be playas, and thugs, living that lie. We need men of morals, who can help make our neighborhoods a better place to live, rather than just drug shrines and 'ho' strolls."

"The world is bigger than your 'hood, and there's more to life than the 'hood. A seed was planted in me at an early age to glorify my 'hood as if it were a God. But that was an illusion, a cheap dream sold at the price of my dignity, self-worth, and ultimately my freedom. We all have challenges to face, but you can overcome anything. You just have to work at it."

The story isn't over for Row. In fact, it's just beginning. He is now in the process of filing to get his sentence reduced. If he is successful, he could be out within the next year or so. If not, he will be eligible for parole in a couple of years.

Row started doing Christian rap in 2004 and plans to pursue his twenty-year-old dream of recording his lyrics when he is released. He has just completed his first album, "Lyrical Sermon," and is writing several companies in hopes of getting his music on the airwaves.

"It's hard from here, but I refuse to give up. I know I'm gonna make it rapping; I have the determination, the lyrics and the Lord on my side. I also know that when I get out, I'm gonna stay out, because I now stand for something different." My personal favorite song by Row is "That Ain't Me No Mo'!"

"Yeah man, that was the second Christian rap song I wrote and is included in this album. What inspired me to write it was that whenever my friends wanted to go burglarizing, score dope, or jacking, they would always come get me. They knew I was down with anything. That song is my message that when they come to get me this time, I'm lettin' know that ain't me no mo'."

With Row's permission, I have included the lyrics to that song, hoping to inspire Beat readers to take the same stand that Row is taking. But enough. I'll let Row tell you how it go. Somebody give him a beat!

That Ain't Me No Mo'!

Verse #1

As I look at the world it's hard to believe
I was once spiritually blind and spiritually deceived
But the Lord sent his Spirit to open up my eyes
To open up my heart and remove the disguise
Of the enemy and his works, now I can see them clear
My life don't revolve around weed, sex, and beer
I used to be a bad boy, the streets were my home
Desiring fine things, like a Navi on chrome
Thinking the only way to achieve was to go and do wrong
I know a lot of brothers can relate to this song
I'm saying all of this just to set the pace
Before the enemy comes and your soul is erased
Or you catch another case while on your paper chase
The Lord has all the treasures, so do an about face
The Lord's mighty hand caused me to change my plan
Transformed the bad boy into a spiritual man
During all my lonely nights, Jesus was there with Row
That's why I can boldly say, "That ain't me no mo'!"

Chorus 2x

Row, let's kick do', that ain't me no mo'!
Row, let's go sco', that ain't me no mo'!
Row, let's go blow, that ain't me no mo'!
I'm straight up telling you, that ain't me no mo'!

Verse #2

Now when I say, "That ain't me no mo'!" Some gone look
strange at Row
'Cause they know me from befo' when I useta kick do'
And do all kinda thangs just to get some pocket change
Like dig in my wife's purse and go and pawn the diamond

rang

That I bought her, I never spun no time with my sons and
daughter
I had the mind of a beast, being led to the slaughter
All of this for what? A dollar and a quarter
But now I've been redeemed, I'm finna get my life in order
On one accord, on the accord of one
We've got to gird our minds if we gone save our sons
I'd ratha die in God's word than die in the slums
I've gave my life to Christ, so life has begun
So when you hit the do', just remember ol' Row
And tell the whole world, "That ain't me no mo'!"

Chorus 2x

Verse #3

That ain't me no mo'! Yeah, that's what I said
So if you plan to cross my path, you best to have it in your
head
The enemy comes daily, trying to play me and persuade me
But I've been covered by the blood, so I know he can't fade
me
But I have so many questions on this road to perfection
During each Bible session, I receive Holy injections
Of words, God's promises, as the Spirit teaches how to live
Freely I receive, so freely I must give
So you can keep your hyro, endo', and your rocks, bro'
'Cause God gave me a natural high; I'm no longer depended
on no chemical
Fa show, I useta kick do', and go sco', so I could blow
But I'm standing here tonight, tellin' you, that ain't me no
mo'!

Chorus 2x

INDIO

Sending love to us from Glen Mills School in Concordville, PA, our old friend, Indio drops two heavy hitting pieces on us — one, a letter to us, the other, an incredible poem about what he believes in. And although we don't agree with killing off your own people to cause an uprising, we can't help but respect his opinion that the decision to be involved in gangs is solely his, and that's a choice he's made. As far as writing goes, this poet is in a class all by himself. Playing with words and remaining real all at the same time. We look forward to his next submissions, and we hope this talented young man sees the light before he finds himself locked away for good.

Self-Reflect

I withdrawal myself
To the profoundest reaches of my mind,
Analyzing my life eternally,
Seems like insufficient time.
My life unfolds before my eyes
And I see where faults exist,
I don't set goals, too high or far,
To ensure I never miss.
Is it pride, or is it fear,
That restrains me from advancement?
Or is it just the simple fact that
I'd rather never chance it?
I claim a righteous cause,
I want to lead mi gente,
And maybe in a future day,
Become a presidente.
Many people praise me,
And tell me of my capabilities,
But once they know my style of life,
They'd state two possibilities.
Death or jail, is what they'd say,
Forget my mental intelligence,
Never will this gang-bangin' fool
Reach a state of excellence.
I see it and I don't approve,
But who am I to speak my thoughts?
Within myself an inner war,
A kind of war they've never fought.
In slow motion
I see the actions of those around me,
I see the faulty ones,
Who wish that hell would come surround me.
No lies from me,
I don't abide, a rebel of a sort,
Born and raised in San Jose,
Judged in the streets like court.
I wish to help, I truly do,
But see this through my eyes,
Never say I'll end my ways,
All this would be is lies.
They inquire of my affiliation,
And the reasons for my actions,
Why must I hurt my enemies,
To smile in satisfaction?
They ask of what kind of constraints,
Chain me to my gang,
Little do they understand,
It's me who binds these chains.
I refuse to go against the laws,
And long standing beliefs,
Society's laws deviate,
From our laws in the streets.
Hypocrisy is not uncommon,
But I refuse to give.
Prejudiced when you realize,
The way I choose to live.
Now I'm not the one you thought,
I once was when we met,
Suddenly don't deserve the best,

My life unfolds before my eyes
And I see where faults exist,
I don't set goals, too high or far,
To ensure I never miss.

It's like I'm now in debt.
Those who made me now hate me,
And still attempt to break me,
If you think I'm evil,
I'll stand my ground when the devil comes to take me.
Now that you wonder,
I'm just another educated criminal,
Your motivation to see me rise,
Will now be much more minimal.
Accept me for what I am,
And what I have become,
My pain within mind, body, and soul
Collectively amounts to none.
Immunity I have obtained,
To your scrutinizing judgment,
Stress is not a friend of mine,
And your thoughtless words don't torment.
Inside my mind I have obtained,
An everlasting bliss,
Ponderous thoughts reside within,
Which go something like this,
They say I'll never make it,
The way that I am going.
A simple thing can fix this,
That for a while I've been knowing.
The only thing that stops me from success
In this community,
Is that people like myself,
To your laws have no immunity.
You constantly say, we'll never make it,
And that's exactly why,
Allow us to have a chance in life,
Instead of counting as we die.
So many studies, surveys and such,
Why can't you see the facts?
Simple words hold us back,
With law supporting to the max.
How dare you say that I don't wish
To be a part of this world,
Maybe it's that I grew up
In a way you've never heard.
I cannot say,
I understand exactly why they do,
The things they do to see us down,
But maybe I'm a foo'.
Now can you see why it is hard
To even help myself?
Why it is hard to even try,
When it comes to someone else?
I think this through over and over,
Within my mental space,
All it takes is for you to allow me,
To take a rightful place.
But I am not
Just another statistic or a number,
Awareness is my weapon of choice,
To wake a raza from their slumber.
Within I hold a power,
Which I'm never letting go,
A power that controls me,
Which must never cease to grow.

The Beat

It's a trip when I begin to think about what my surroundings really consist of. Solid, righteous carnales who feel my pain when I'm down, and who wish to see me succeed, and the phonies who couldn't care less whether I became another statistic, another dead gang-banger. The world is better with one less to worry about, is that what they really feel?

My family has reached a point where they no longer attempt to change my ways. That time passed long ago. But now here I am 17 years old and I want to help, but I'm not naïve or innocent. I know that it's hard to be accepted. People don't want to see a Chicano gang-member who has tormented these streets rise as any type of positive entity. They don't want to hear that he suddenly has something positive to say. But to put it out there as straight forward as possible, I really don't care what they think. I love my familia, blood related and extended (the homeboys and home girls.) I do what I do and it's just the way I have chosen to live.

It's true I'm a smart vato — maybe smarter than most privileged (rich) kids my age. But I'll be damned if I put myself above my own people that I grew up with, cause I don't see myself as anything better than what I am. I love my raza. I have said it many times, "it's time for our up rise." And that's

INDIO (CONT.)

exactly what I mean: our up rise. If I make it myself in this world, what does it truly matter? I'll just be another sell-out vato who once bestowed with the chance to escape the barrio, took it and left his gente. That's how I see it. I'm not looking for ways to escape, who in the world seeks to escape where they feel most comfortable, the barrio is my life, my home, my sanctuary, and all this I hold dearly.

It's not my purpose to find a better life where I don't have to see all the bad things or should I say real life. Out of sight, out of mind, I don't believe that B.S. I want to help and I want to stay true to myself, maybe I'm selfish for wanting the best of both worlds. It's a twisted situation especially how the system is cutting my legs from under me, but I'm maintaining my composure and trying to fit this all together. If they didn't know my history, they would all love me, every single one of them, but I'm for real every single part of me is 100% legit, from the 186's (gang enhancements to the 22's my current ACT scores (American Colleges Testing.) But you ain't listening.

People don't want to see a Chicano gang-member who has tormented these streets rise as any type of positive entity.

NICK FLOYD

It's been a long time since we heard from our old friend, the fearless Nick Floyd. We first met Nick when he was fighting for his life in the max unit in Alameda County Juvenile Hall. During this period Nick would step up huge as a writer and reader each week in The Beat Within with his heartfelt poems and thoughts. Upon turning 18, Nick was then sent to county jail pending his case. Today, Nick is in the middle of his prison sentence in the California Department of Corrections, sadly we cannot find his prison address nor the original copies of this piece. Regardless we did not want his work to be put on hold due to our error. We hope Nick sees his work soon. Please forward it to him if you know him. We also hope to hear from him soon. Read on...

The Light Or The Dark

Surrounded in an battlefield by good and evil
 Haunted by Satan and damnation
 Cries of pain and agony asking for another chance
 Faced with a new obstacle each and everyday
 Enemies wishing failure upon us
 Death is the corner of our eyes
 The belly of the beast starving
 and trying to take a bite out of us
 However, we all have a light at the end of the tunnel
 If darkness surrounds us,
 we must reach for the light above us
 If the devil stalks us,
 we must plead the blood of Jesus on ourselves
 As long as you walk with the Almighty,
 success will be yours
 If you choose darkness,
 agony and pain will be yours to keep
 The day is near when the choice will be the light or the dark
 Everyday we live it should be for our Almighty
 Fear of anything is not an option
 This is a battle we can fight with or without armor
 The light is your armor and the dark is nothing
 Our only two weapons are honor and love
 While our enemies have dishonor and hate
 The light will prevail while the dark will diminish
 The choice is yours
 Which side do you want to be on in the battlefield of good
 and evil?

They Say

They say were a menace to society.
 Damn, ain't that a joke.
 If it wasn't for George Bush, the Untied States
 wouldn't be broke.
 They got money to build prisons, but not schools.
 What do they think? We're a bunch of fools?
 The system ain't about rehabilitation, it's about
 condemnation.
 They're afraid of us exposing the truth.
 I may be young but still wanna help today's youth.
 The devil is out there playin' for keeps.
 Unity and God is our only weapons of defeat.
 They tried to shatter my dreams, but I will succeed by
 any means. Adolescence tried to break me,
 streets to make me, and the devil tried to take me.
 Through it all, I still stand strong.
 I know I've done a lot of wrong,
 but why did I have to suffer for so damn long?
 Lord Jesus, please deliver my soul.
 For you are the only one who can make me whole.



DALTON COLLIUS

We are so honored to welcome to our pages first time writer Dalton Collius who steps up huge from the heart with a very touching yet important letter to The Beat Within, and delivers two wonderful poems from his personal collection of poetry. We truly hope he continues to share a little bit more of this heartfelt poetry with us readers. The works he shares is very strong and speaks volumes to all of us reading this publication. Thank you Dalton, we look forward to hearing from you again. The Beat Within patiently awaits your next submission. Dalton Collius writes us from the Texas Department of Corrections in Iowa Park, Texas.

Envisioning Heaven (A Non-believer Contemplates)

Restless I lie awake in the night
Pondering thing in the lack of light
Heaven... if it exists,
What it might be like...

Now: I count myself among non-believers
Viewing most preachers as cunning deceivers
Opportunities afflicted by a greedy fever
But my mind just wouldn't let it rest...

I dismissed it interpreted literally,
"How absurd that is," I said to me
I dismissed it referred to colloquially
Thinking ... how would God build it
If he built it for me...

There would be color; all nature's hues
Green, browns, yellows and blues
Sun, rain, laughter and mirth
Rivers, oceans and fertile earth...

There'd be on riches, nor poverty
No ideas of wealth or prosperity
There would be work; for to work is to be free
Rather that toil in drudgery
For ideas of ambition, careerism or greed;
But to work for each other so we all succeed...

The poisons and toxins that pollute our life
Hate, racism, bitterness and strife
Robbing the Earth of positive light
Will be left behind in eternal night...

There would be little suffering and little pain
Remnants of humanness to remain
Keeping us humble
That we grow not vain...

Admittance would hinge on rejecting all sects,
And agreeing to live by one simple text:
Do unto others as you'd have done to you
Leaving misdeeds for others to rue...

These thoughts in mind I finally slept
And in my dreams I cried and I wept
Hoping there is just a such place
And be there a God He'll bestow on me grace...

Dear Beat Within

Greetings all! I wanted to express my gratitude for placing me on your mailing list. Received my first issue of "The Beat Within" at mail call yesterday - it is indeed appreciated. If I may:

What I find particularly appealing about "The Beat Within" is the rawness and passion of the writers. The shameless sincerity and vulnerability reflected in some of these poems and writings reflect a simple fact that society needs to be constantly reminded of ; i.e., that these young people are thinking, feeling human beings; they love, regret, long for, fear, and need... just as do those who look down from ivory towers passing judgment and sentencing the so-called unwashed masses. Indeed, most of these kids crimes pale in comparison to those committed in the name of the state. Under the umbrella of law, by person with letters after their names instead of numbers!

I admire the fire of creativity burning in the inner being of these writers- however- sadly, many(if not most) will move on and in time have that fire, that spark (that humanness) extinguished by the cruelties of their reality. We should (and I thank projects like The Beat Within for doing so), encourage them all to struggle for positive, creative expression - to embrace a spirit of resistance rather than accept defeat (and all that, that implies), and emerge from this crucible of hardship stronger and better prepared to overcome the many (seemingly insurmountable) obstacle they will undoubtedly face...

In my initial letter to "The Beat Within" I inquired as to now one goes about submitting poetry/artwork/etc. for print consideration...I received no additional information; so I assume its "open mike night" at "The Beat Within!" I'm occasionally inspired to write a little, and over the years I've penned a small collection of poetry; inspired by various conditions, times and places- reflections of this never ending sentence /nightmare.

Enclosed are a couple poems that I hope you'll find worthy to include in your publication.

Thank you for your time and consideration...
Sincerely

Twenty Years (Monster)

A ruthless opportunist paces in a sweltering cage
An accomplished predator; his mind reeling, desires
never sated,

No one immune to his disease
Searching, always searching, for the angle, the
weakness

Twenty years; no education
Twenty years; answering to no one, loyal only to his
desires

Twenty years; feeding the sickness, mental confusion,
self imposed ignorance

Twenty years; a mind deteriorates...but searching
Always searching, for the angel, the weakness

A ruthless opportunist sits in a sweltering cage...
Next week he will be freed.



Man In The Mirror

A reflection of a man, of this man, of myself is viewed through a momentary glance of what is commonly called a mirror. A mirror is a piece of glass or aluminum covered with a specific material designed for the purpose of looking into while simultaneously receiving a complete reflection of yourself. It's a trip to look into a mirror as your eyes search the identification of self, an external visual perception of who you are.

The total realized truth in relation to what is actually tangible is often deceptive to the untrained eye. The individual who is searching for the answers to what is unknown by only investigating the visual components of a man is often left with a voided perception, or a half-truth. For instance, sometime when I look in the mirror with an expectation of experiencing a different feeling, I'm left confused in between what my eye can see and the depth of the internal side of the physical image portrayed through the reflection in the mirror. At first glance I see this black man (and not too bad of a looker if I say so myself) who is trapped inside of an image. The image associates itself with the profile of an urban styled gangster, with tattoos painting a picture and describing the theme of my life from the face/neck on down. As I inspect the reflected visual with an attempt to sort through the camouflage, I try to visualize what the everyday people who look at me and come in contact with my physical impression see and think. Not that it matters all that much, for in the process of creating this image, I've grown to learn that an impression only remains stained if the individual has not the ability to associate his intelligence, demeanor, mannerism, and articulation in a compatible way with the individuals one is interrelating with.

By impression, only the man in the mirror can deceive and mislead the prejudgments of others. However, the man in the mirror can only deceive his self if he is unwilling to acknowledge and therefore neglect the essential parts of self. By examining the internal expressive parts within the community of self (the parts of a being that are unseen, but, play a vivid role in completing the total make up of the person) one becomes aware of the depth of his nature. Through learning to internalize my vision when I look at myself in the mirror, the confusion begins to diminish and is gradually being replaced by an overstanding which relates to the physical interpretation of my appearance being only one aspect of who I am.

Within the complete ignorance of my youth (I turned 32 years old 12-5-05), I intensely believed that the gangster in me was the total of my being as a man-child. I personified each aspect and developed the courage to carry through

DESHAUN LAVENDER

Although Deshaun

Lavender wrote this profound piece — reflecting on reflections — before Christmas, the power of his words will always be relevant. In this piece, Deshaun looks at himself in the mirror and finds a more complete image than most of us are willing to look at as closely when we admire ourselves in the mirror. And while he describes the reflection of his outer self as "not too bad of a looker," we are convinced that his true beauty lies within. If, as Socrates wrote, the unexamined life is not worth living, then Deshaun has made his life very worth living by examining his past and his present, and integrating the person we all see on the outside with the person we don't see on the inside. And yet, with the brilliance of his writing, we do see that person on the inside — which is why we are able to see the beauty that shines back through the eyes in that mirror, and through the words in this piece. Deshaun Lavender continues to reflect and write from High Desert State Prison in Susanville.

each action in the form of what I was taught a gangster to be. Nothing else really mattered at the time. You see, in time through tested experience, I learned the belief to be a false one in the fact that I lacked the insight to tie that part of my personality into the larger portion of the three dimensional aspects which if properly cultivated brings the mind, body and soul together as one.

Today I walk as a man, a man that's aware of my past failures in addition to all the work I've put in on both sides of this level four wall. This knowledge provides a sense of direction as I secure and protect the grounds my feet pound, watching my front and back. This lifestyle has created a mindset that is at all times on point to the potential dangers that lurk beneath the eyelids of every man, this reality has evolved into a way of life, a mandatory requirement.

In the midst of breaking through the heavy clouds of ignorance to finally gain a piece of a perspective outlook, I've also recognized there's much more to life as well as my existence in this life than the very limited single minded version. There's been a breakthrough. Hey, I've finally realized there's a balance that one must seek to even begin the long process of redirecting attention and focus. Balance preserves life. The world is made up of a delicate balance. It's a universal law.

From this point on when you look in the mirror and stare yourself eye to eye look past what you can see. Look deeper into yourself as to find and locate the expression of the hidden reflection. It's in you, in our parents, ancestors, heritage and people. It's in all of mankind. Search and you shall find.

I'll like to take a moment to commemorate the lost of O.G Tookie he stood as a man, a soldier/warrior, a leader, a teacher, a community revolutionizer in progress. I pay my respect by saluting his legacy and by all means may his soul enter the heavens where the honorable reside.

Movin' forever forward. Strength, courage, wisdom.

An Introduction

I humbly extend my respectful regards to all of you. I was thinking about you guys and decided to come off the head with this brief piece titled, "Man In The Mirror." We as individuals are so caught between the images and the actual nature of a person, place or thing. Mass media has conditioned our minds to a degree through a constant bombardment of impressions to accept images above and beyond anything else the person has to offer. I believe we have to tear down these images and relearn how to inter-relate with the person, the people. The people are what's important, relating and overstanding them, not their image.

I'll also like to take a moment to commemorate the loss of OG Tookie Williams. He stood as a man, a soldier/warrior, a leader, a teacher, a community revolutionizer in progress. I pay my respects by saluting his legacy, and by all means. May his soul enter the heavens where the honorable reside.

Movin' forever forward — strength, courage, wisdom.



LIL' TYSON

When Lil' Tyson left our unit at SF/YGC, we were afraid we might not hear from him again. But since he's been gone, we've heard from him several times, and always with interesting pieces. Here he tells us about the "unstoppable" team of two brothers — who have now been stopped! We have always been impressed with Lil' Tyson's skills as a writer. At the same time, we're worried from what we read (including the one poem by Lil' Tyson's brother, Oso) that these two talented brothers might still think they can "out-slick" the system and return to their old ways when they get home. We hope we're wrong because that "easy time" in the halls is no longer an option; the risks are now much greater. The future will answer the question of Lil' Tyson's and Oso's intentions, and the answer to that question will determine their future. We hope they are maturing up, 'cause all Glen Mills is, is a time out from the streets and once they're back to they fall back into the traps? Time will tell. At the moment, both brothers reside at Glen Mills Schools in Concordville, Pennsylvania.

Me And My "Twin"

What's up, Beat? This be Lil' Tyson coming at y'all from the Mills. Today I'm gonna write about my brother relationship. For all that don't know, Oso is my younger brother. Yeah, we both up here. Oso is big, tall, and shhh. Well compared to me. I'm only 11 months older, so we practically faced the same tribulations together. We did go through crazy-ass shhh back in the San Francisco, back when we were freely roaming the streets.

But yeah, we both were born in Mexico D.F., also known as Mexico City. I was born in September, and 11 months later Oso came along, so I was never alone. All my life I always had somebody to play with, somebody to be mad at, somebody to grow up with. Oso was always a big vato, but other than that, we looked so identical that we grew up telling people that we were twins.

To get to the point, mom and pops came to San Francisco, California, and found a spot for the fam's. That was when shhh got started. We got enrolled in school. From 1st — 3rd grade we learned English. So 1st — 5th was all good.

But from 6th grade and on, excitement came into our lives. Oso and I want power, money, and respect. So we started a lil' click. We started copping some weed to sell and smoke. We got into mad beef. But you know the fools that were part of the click ended being some suckas. Put it like this: when it was time to rumble, scary wannabes will run except Oso and my boys, Looney and Casper. We were the only ones throwing them, and taking ass whoopings. But that shhh only got us stronger.

Older homies seen we were no punks and knew we're some young g's tryna come up. So we started kicking it with them.

It wasn't clicks and little bags of weed no more, it was homies, one gang, one color and a whole lot of weed, cream, ice, and all types of shhh. We were doing the damn thang. Both of us were on the block grinding. I'll be in one spot and Oso will be in the next. So money came quick. When I ran out

In two weeks, we were back on the block, but on the low. Somehow, the same shhh happened all over again

of product, I'll hit up Oso and let him handle it. All the fiends loved the twins. We always had shhh and when it was to fight, Tyson and Oso were an unstoppable tag team. We always had each other's back. We were some slick mothas. Couldn't get caught with shhh. So we thought. Having it good, we slipped a lil' that we got caught off guard.

Some fool rolled deep on us and started rumbling us. Oso and Tyson and a couple homeboys started knocking a couple of them, but we were outnumbered so we broke. Never thought Oso and Tyson would be apart, but it happened. Every man for his own. Forget the bull. I got did up and thought it was time. But somehow I made it.

In two weeks, we were back on the block, but on the low. Somehow, the same shhh happened all over again, and this time the victim was Oso. He made it too, but 5-0 started getting curious. We never said shhh to them. And we kept it like that. After doing what needed to be done, we were back on da grind, a lil' paranoid, but not for long. But little did we know 5-0 stayed on our ass. So shhh was hot. Everybody knew the twins now. The drama just brought the attention to us. Since we were well known, snitches started talking. So that's how we came into the system. I got into a lil' personal beef, snitches talked and here came the cops. My brother handled his business, someone talked, there came the cops.

Stuff wasn't organized no more. And that messed us up. Out on probation, we kept it cool for a minute. But suckas thought they were tough so they had to get dealt with. People wouldn't shut up, so back to the halls where this time they really screwed us. Locked up for different cases but in da same facility. I was put in a different unit, 'cause they knew about Tyson and Oso. But we always found a way to communicate. Holding each other down, we stayed strong.

Oso got sent to Glen Mills as I was still fighting my case. Six months later I took a deal and said. "Forget it! Send me to the Mills with Oso!" And ever since we've been away from our freedom but still riding this shhh out together. Oso should be home later this year and I'll be out there early next year. But on a real tip though during our time away, our minds have matured a lot. So hopefully we play shhh smart 'cause our Juvenile years are over. I'm out, till next time.

RIP Homeboy

You finally free homeboy
Don't trip you in a better place
Your absence hurts a lot of us
But we keep our game face

As I smile through my cries
I remember those OG days
You doing you and me doing me
Living life like a parade

In a life of smiles and cries
Where we wear masks to hide
Take it till we make it
And we ride till we die

You'll always be remembered homeboy
May you rest in peace

RIP to all the that have deceased
May y'all rest in peace



All Talk

I'm getting' tired
Of these fake-ass ninjas
Talking all that shhh
But afraid to pull the trigga

Suckas hiding behind the program
Selling all types of wolf tickets
Talking 'bout they savs
But they running their mouth like babies

All up in my grill
Trying to know my business
I say nothing and stay to myself
'Cause this program is filled with snitches

So-called gangstas
Spitting the tape
All in staff face
Nothing I can relate

Me I'm a gangster
I handle shhh my way
A soldier from California
They don't know
How I get down

So I say nothing
And hear them talk
See the boy in their eyes
While I continue with my walk

But I'm still tired
Hearing these fakes talk.

Oso and Lil' Tyson
See, there's a lot of people
I could trust, but then again

LIL' TYSON (CONT.)

There are a few that I cannot.

There's one person that I would kill and die for
And that's my brother Lil' Tyson
See, me and him been through a lot
From ass whoopings
From moms to running from the cops

Me and my brother
Are just alike
Except he is shorter
And I'm taller
But we still ride or die

We started coming up
In the game lil' by lil'
Until we got our names
And started getting the fame lil' by lil'
We started playing with the big boys
Making big noise playing with the big toys

We went from slangin' trees
To slangin' cream
We like mice stacking our cheese

We doing it big we doing it legit
Breezee trying to get done up
Screezes trying to run up

But it's coo' 'cause if you ride
With the set then you down
Forget the rest

'Cause we ain't playing out here
We living in struggle
Messing with Oso and Tyson

We started playing with the big boys
Making big noise playing with the big toys

SMILEY

It is so good to have our old friend Smiley, aka George R. back in The Beat Within. Sure, it took us awhile but here he is full force with plenty of love to share via his poetry, and of course the frustrations with love once we find ourselves away from the one's we truly love. We first met the talented Smiley in Santa Clara County Juvenile Hall, the last time in the max unit where he put it down in a big time way, now he is in the California Youth Authority in Stockton California where he continues to write for himself and for us all to read. Looking forward to the next installment Smiley, thanks! Good to hear from you too.

Why We Cry

Why we cry, that's very difficult to say
I guess it depends on the person and what they have to say
I see the world rearranging people changing
Trying to act less emotional and tougher
What ever happened to expressing yourself to more people
Instead of just the ones you love
Letting people know how you feel doesn't make you lesser
of a person
All your gonna do is take down your front and stop cursing
I ain't gonna lie some people use emotion to draw attention
Just so someone can be kind and release the tension
Some people during a relationship use emotions
To get over on their significant other
What they didn't know is it not only
Affects other people but one another.

My Life

Damn the life that I live is hella crazy
Though never pictured myself in a system cell
I know I was corrupt but I thought I'd
Make it out of my inner prison hell
I had the same cell for over 18 years now
Still looking at the situation wondering how?
But let me take this back to when I was a lil' kid
Getting into trouble for every sin that I did
Seeing shhh that left me scarred for very long
Just picturing my problems in rappers in rappers songs
So I started to isolate myself from the world and
everyone in my life
Nobody gave a damn about this young soldier
So why do I have to strive
I'm so lost in this word
Now everything to me seems like its spinning
But I do get glimpses of people dying
And others in the game of sinning
I never chose the life that I live in it
Seems like this game chose me
So I've been stuck with fighting a war
As a ghetto soldier from the streets
What ever happens to raising your family
Including kids right
So society doesn't have to worry about young thugs
Wandering the streets at night

SMILEY (CONT.)

Lately (Part One)

Lately there ain't been stuff to do
Mainly 'cause I'm missing you
Lately you've been waiting for me
But really, I've been waiting for you
Thought when I was out there
Was no other truer two
Lately I've been thinking about you
Wondering if you're still my lady
If not... don't know what you've put me through
Got me going hella crazy
I never felt like this with any other
Female that I've been with
And the way I treated you by being in here
Has me hella pissed
Lately I've been wondering what we
Would be doing if I was out
No doubt I would probably be on
The way to take you out
Lately most of the songs I be hearing
On the radio has me thinking of us.
You know I truly love you
So there is hardly room for lust
Lately I've been thinking about where we
Would be if we never met each other
I would still be playing basketball and
Walking by myself not knowing one another
But life didn't want us to go that way
And I'm glad you bring light into my darken eyes.

To the Abused Woman (Part Two)

See I hope you know where I'm
Coming from 'cause I know where you been
I just wish there was more people
Like me to help kill off this unholy sin
To all the woman who think that
They have no reason to stay alive
I will always be here spitting these
Words for you so there's something to strive
I really would like for all you
Females to continue to stay alive
Because in large numbers we can
Accomplish more every time
I will be there ever time you need
Me just as long as we fight these fools
Let them know that you are mentally
Stronger so you set the rules
Let them know that they need to
Shape up or get out
Because there is plenty of other men
Who would treat you better without a doubt
If you don't find love then I
Guess it was not meant to be
Just for you'll I will never get married
Just to reach out to you G.
See we can be a family you'll be my sisters
I'll be your brother look out for each other
Because our father was Adam
And Eve was out mother
Let them know about what
Happened to Adam and Eve
If it wasn't for you, they
Would not have been conceived
To the man, grow up and treat them right
'Cause right now your working against God,
On the devil's side
I guess I'll end this with I love ya'll and take care
And just know Smiley with always be there.

To the Abused Woman (Part one)

Do you really want someone's love and affection
But all you are doing is getting unwanted attention
You need to watch out for these tricks
If you're a boy they aint gonna give you shhh
Females only get busted lips
Getting used and abused by these punk fools
Girl you need to leave him 'cause you don't have shhh
to lose
You don't need to get treated like this every freakin day.
Letting that sucka use you to his advantage any type of
way
It's either you kick him out of the door
Or get ghost 'cause there's no love for each other
anymore
To all the women getting abused you need to
Stand up and be strong for yourself
Let that woman beater know what's on your mind
And what you're really about
You have to let him know that you're willing to fight
back against his attacks
If not physical, let it be verbal
Emotional or mental attacks, shhh like that
You females need to be proud of what you is.
Let him hurt before he treats you like this.
See I kind of understand what you are going through
'Cause me and my mom was dealt the same hand too
Every time I see a female get hit
In front of my families or my face
I tell her pops or her boyfriend if he hits her
One more time we are going to fade
I just can't stand the type of shhh you'll go through
'Cause every time I see it, I go through it too
Every time you get hit I feel that
Every time you get bit I feel that
Every time you get abused I feel that
Every time he leaves a bruise I feel that
Every time you feel unloved I feel that
Every time you shed some blood I feel that
Every time someone dies from abuse I feel that
Every time I see you on the news I feel that
Every time you cry from pain I feel that
It drips from my body as if it came from the sky like
rain.
You feel that.

Where Were You

Remember when we first met
You said we'd always be together forever
And our love will never die
But you know there was a time limit on out little love
fantasy
It was all a lie
I knew when I first saw you
I thought that we could somehow make it work
Even though the last time you saw me
You thought that I turned into a jerk
Remember when I used to say I love you
Then you say I love you too
But ever time Smiley got locked up
Where the hell were you
I'll tell you were I was but you'd walk away
And won't listen to the shhh I have to say
The first time I got locked up
Was when I told you to take care
My love will surround you while I'm not there
Then I went to J-hall and you only wrote me one letter
Just wrote some quick B-S to make me feel better
I was in there tripping over the time that I might face
While you're out doing crystal thinking shhh is a game
While you was getting high Smiley's over there stressing
And I first thought being with you was a blessing

Lately (Part Two)

But lately I've been waking
Up with some fishy ass dreams
In the end of the dream
I can see you leaving me
Maybe that can explain some
Of the problems I've been having here
Because when I was with you
My thoughts were really clear
Now my mind is in a haze
Wondering around just to pass the day
I just can't stand it no more
I wish someone would wake me from my trance
Still wondering and wishing if you and
I can go on with our romance
I just don't know what is really
Going on in my life anymore
Seems like every one left me
My thoughts and feelings standing in the door
Lately you haven't taken the time
Out of you day to write me
But like they say when you're a thug
Can't expect every thing at your feet
I know you probably moved on
Not even to think of Smiley
But I remember I really didn't care for you
It was all about me
Lately you're the one that has me resorting to this crazy
life, girl
Can't trust your kind even if all were the last kind on
the world
If I was out I don't thing that I could stand you
'Cause you is a female with a messed up attitude
That's just a handful
I guess you can tell in time
Which ones are faithful and who's lying
Lately I've wanted to tell you
That we weren't to be together so were through

To My First Love

You know I want you to read this before
You crumple it up and throw it away
Over these last few years
I've been thinking about you and this what I have to say
See these last few years
I ain't been feeling as cool
Maybe because I'm missing you
You know I never should have gotten mad
When you accused my of cheating
'Cause it was true
Before I got with you
I was going out with this girl Felicia
But if you would have taken time you see
That I always had cheated check my profile
I don't know why I would want to risk
Stuff just so I can live a double life
Maybe because I am two people with
Two different sets of goals for me to strive
But it is still no excuse for me to use you like I did
I was always looking for someone else to love
But you can't lie
I was the one who came to wipe all of your tears away
Loved you like no one else has and
Always was there to listen to what you had to say
You know they say you can't love the same like the very
first time
So I know tears from now
Deep down inside
You'll always be mine.

SMILEY (CONT.)

To Momma

I know this may sound kind of weak
'Cause I wrote this of the top of my dome
I know you be crying at night still
Wishing your son can come home
I'm sorry
I didn't mean to cause you so much pain and problems
But I just want you to know all this time
I've been gone
I'm working on mine to solve them
I know you been feeling lonely cause
I am not there to cheer him up
But I want you to know where ever I am at
You'll still receive my love
Don't stress on how long I have been and will be gone
Just think I have never left you
'Cause a piece of me been with you
All along
I want to let you know that I am always thinking of you
And that if life's treating you right
Because I know you be thinking on where I'm at
And what I'm doing every night
Just know that I'd be praying for you and what is left of
the family
Knowing it's hard to see your son
Grow up in this system as a man see
But you need to stop worrying about me
I will come back for you
And this time I get out
my promises I made will become true
I will be ready to give up the life that I lived in the past
Just so we can be safe and go to place to have a blast
I know they be missing me 'cause I be missing them too
'Cause now that I look at it I have a lot of shhh to lose
So you can stop crying and hold on to them tears
'Cause your gonna need them for the stuff I accomplish
Throughout on coming years
Just like when I graduated high school
Seeing you shed them in a happy way makes me feel
cool
I want to end this with a take care and I love you too
You seen the past so you know what I say is always true



Don't ask me where I am from, don't ask me who I ride with. I don't claim no 'hood! I ride for you; I'll tell you the truth. I helped make this possible. Make what possible? For all your mammas to cry 'cause their babies are locked up. I helped carve the path you travel today — OG all the way!

Something's not right! My lil' folks, they all locked up. Someone done flipped the script. This, you my young folks in cage, awe hell no! That ain't right, we need to change that!

check out the rest of Thee Mouseman's BWO piece on page 46

